ANNOUNCING OUR ARTISAN AWARD WINNERS

food, wine & good living

Cuisine

ISSUE 139
MARCH 2010

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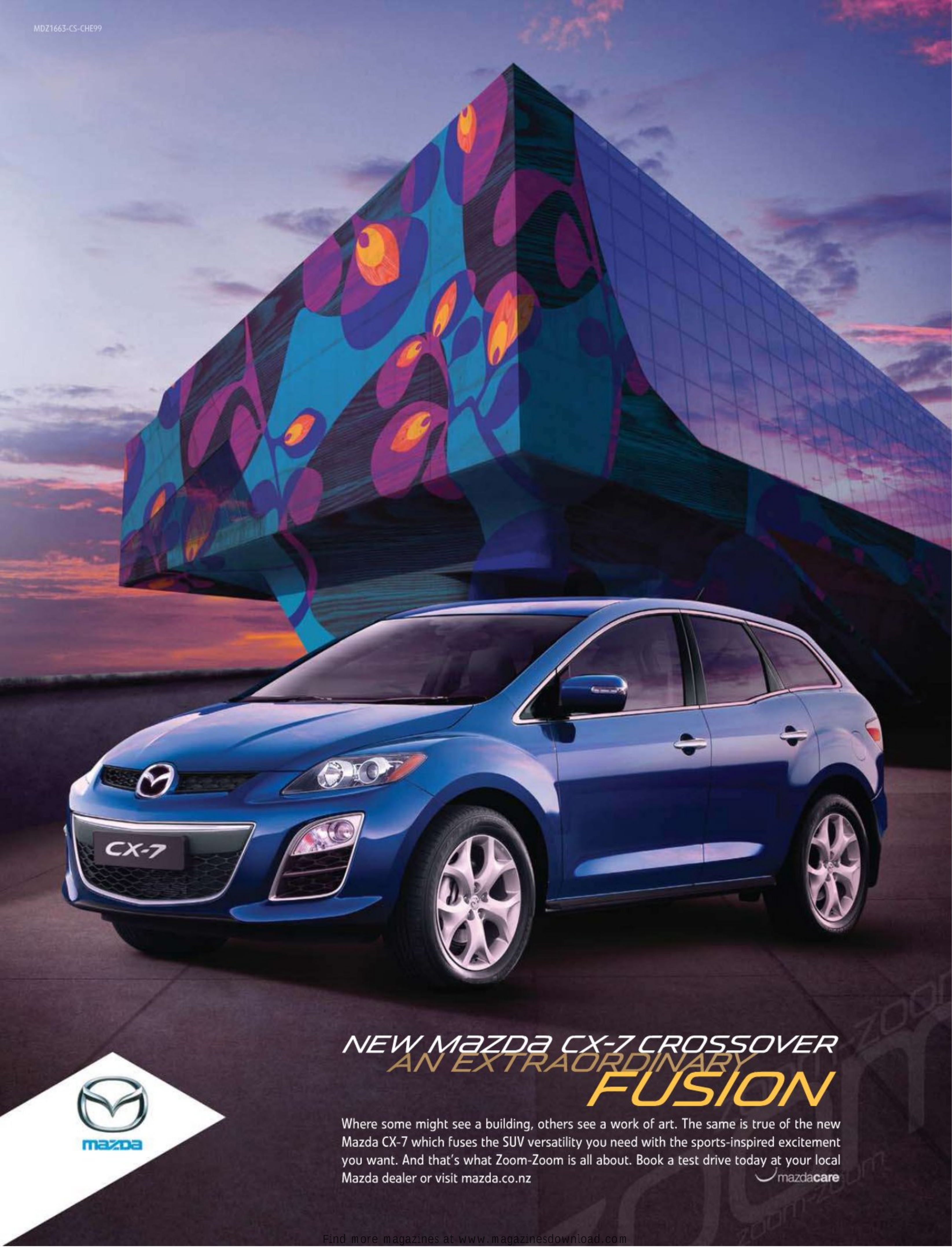

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY ETHAN TEY AT VILLA MARIA ESTATE, AUCKLAND. VILLAMARIA.CO.NZ

This is the second year of our Artisan Awards and what an incredibly diverse range of products they have unearthed. We are really excited about how these awards have progressed and it is a testament to the originality of thinking and ingenuity of the artisan in New Zealand. Again the judges were impressed with the calibre of the products entered and what came through so strongly this year were the characters and stories behind the produce. See page 43 for a full report on the winners.

Our cover has a little of the Midas touch, inspired by the booming dairy industry and to celebrate the upcoming *Cuisine* NZ Champions of Cheese Awards. We are very much behind these awards, too, as they herald the best of the best in this industry and for a small country we certainly produce some innovative cheeses that are worth their weight in gold.

On a personal note, this is my last issue as editor of *Cuisine*. It has been a fantastic year for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the brilliant people that put this great magazine together and it has also been a pleasure seeing the changes that we have put in place resonate so strongly with you, our readers.

I would like to say a heartfelt thank-you to my team for making me feel so welcome. *Cuisine* is in very confident hands and I know it will continue on to greater heights.

Until next time.

Eric

ERIC MATTHEWS

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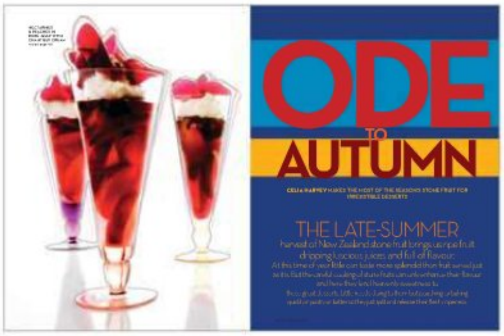

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Le Cordon Bleu World Food Media Awards

Nominee, Best Drink Magazine, 2007
Le Cordon Bleu World Food Media Awards for *Cuisine Wine Country 2007*

PHOTOGRAPH BY AARON McLEAN

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Subscriptions: One year (6 issues) $35. Two years (12 issues) $70. Three years (18 issues) $100.
One year Australia NZ$55. Elsewhere one year NZ$105.
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Cuisine is published alternate months by Fairfax Magazines, a division of Fairfax Media. Fairfax Magazines, 317 New North Rd, Kingsland, (PO Box 6341, Wellesley St), Auckland, New Zealand. Fairfax Media, Fairfax NZ House, 110 Customs St West, Viaduct, Auckland.
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Cuisine magazine accepts no responsibility for the return or the condition of unsolicited manuscripts, art or photography.
Cuisine is registered with the National Library ISBN: 0113-1206
Printing: PMP Print, Christchurch
Circulation per issue: 56,161 (Source NZ Audited Bureau of Circulation; Total Net Circulation; Jan-Dec 2009)
Readership: 395,000 (Source: Nielsen National Readership Survey Jan-Dec 2009)

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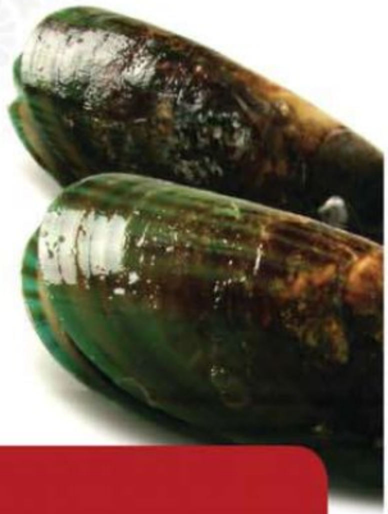
Mussel-bound beefcake seeks saucy gal for green-lipped kisses.



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people in the issue

JO PEARSON

KEN DOWNIE

Auckland chef Jo Pearson – our new contributor for the Course You Can Do It feature – grew up surrounded by quality produce, as her family were orchardists and market gardeners. They were also avid cooks and Jo was introduced to cookery, baking and preserving at a very young age. It became her passion. And her career. For more than a decade she interspersed cooking in New Zealand with numerous trips to Europe. Then, after a one-year-long stay in London, she joined the foundation team at the Richmond Rd Café in Grey Lynn as head chef. She is now group executive chef for that café and three other Auckland landmark cafés, including Takapuna Beach Café, whose delicately flavoured fresh liquorice gelato won the Supreme Award at the 2009 New Zealand Ice Cream Awards.

SUSAN WESTWOOD

For Susan Westwood, Molori Safari Lodge in South Africa (see page 148) was not her first up-close experience with dangerous wildlife. A while back she was working on a story on the home of antique dealer Appley Hoare on the edge of the Camargue. One day, as she and the photographer searched out atmospheric shots in a local village, they noticed suddenly that they were alone with the plane trees and barricades. Barricades? Camargue bulls are beautiful and excellent eating, but live and running in the streets, it's time to step behind the barricades, which Susan and her photographer managed to do just in time. Susan's travel pieces appear regularly in magazines such as *Vogue Living* and *GQ Australia*. When not tracking animals, she is happy with any chance to keep track of the modern renaissance of New York's downtown districts.

CHRIS WARNES

The multi-talented Chris Warnes – who photographed Letter from Sydney for this issue – has always followed his calling. It's just that there have been more than one. He grew up surrounded by delicious food – his parents ran a French restaurant and pâtisseries. But art trumped that, so he studied design, working on Australian interiors magazines such as *Belle* and *Real Living* as an art director. Then Canada called. He went there for a year to ski, turning his design skills to advertising. Then it was Sydney's turn again, the pull of its famous beaches too strong to resist. While in Vancouver, with its glorious hinterland, Chris had been inspired to get behind the lens, and his passion grew to the point where photography became his calling. Chris still lives in Sydney and, while it has cut down his sleep and surfing time, his latest joy is his three-month-old son, Max. "He keeps me smiling, even when he wants to play at 3am."

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winning letter

Dr Mike Joy wins a case of Saint Clair Pioneer Block 3 43 Degrees Sauvignon Blanc 2009 (see below).

Where in the world could you go down to a central city market and legally buy a live, threatened endemic animal? At an Auckland fish market for the bargain price of $19/kg you can buy a live longfin eel. What is worse, most of the eels are at least 30 years old.

These iconic animals have the same threat ranking as kiwi and kereru, but, because of consistent failures by the Ministry of Fisheries and Department of Conservation, we have this bizarre situation where a threatened endemic species can be harvested and sold.

To join the petition calling for a moratorium to commercial harvesting, go to the Forest and Bird website (forestandbird.org.nz). We need to save this very special animal from extinction.

Dr Mike Joy, Paraparaumu

I read with great enthusiasm the editor's letter by Eric Matthews on the impact of consumerism on our beautiful, precious planet (issue 138). He asked for comments and I have a couple. How about a section in *Cuisine* on seasonal sustainable foods, with recipes. As for overfishing, perhaps publish Forest and Bird's list of what fish to eat and what not to eat.

It is great to see a food magazine caring about what's important – namely our food and where it comes from.

Sharon Greally, via email

On a cold and windy winter's day in Hong Kong, reading the January issue (138) was just what I needed to warm my body and soul. Having lived here for 10 years, this issue brought tears to my eyes as I recalled my own childhood summer holidays at the beach.

For three glorious weeks each year, our days were filled with simple things like digging for pipi, fishing off the rocks or night fishing for piper in a small aluminium dinghy aided by torches and homemade spears. We would visit nearby orchards and buy fresh corn and watermelon, and pick berries.

There were always huge pots simmering away on the Primus, ready to feed the masses.

I never knew how wonderful these holidays were until I grew up and moved away. One thing is for sure – I'll be bringing my husband and daughter there one year so they can experience a slice of my perfect Kiwi summer.

Pauleen Fernandez, Hong Kong

The high-end restaurant fish, the Antarctic toothfish (also known as the Chilean sea bass), should be boycotted.

The fishing industry in the Ross Sea in Antarctica may be relatively new, but already scientists are seeing damage to this hitherto untouched ecosystem. Once it is mucked up, it can't be put back together again. The problems are well documented at lastocean.co.nz.

It seems crazy that we would destroy one of our last hopes for understanding how the world really works (without human involvement) for the sake of a pleasant meal.

Nicky Gilkison, Murchison

On a recent sailing holiday a friend gave me her 2009 *Cuisine* magazines to take. They were lifesavers. The fresh ingredients ran out after the first few days and we soon were being force-fed the sailing staples of tinned tuna and packet risotto. So I picked up the *Cuisines* and started flicking, and was soon reading every word, savouring each page, my mouth watering over the gorgeous photography. I kept reading until I reached "Last Bite".

As our food supplies became even more basic, my brain fizzed with ideas for cooking when I returned home. I turned down page corners on the recipes and wrote shopping lists.

I am now home and my first task is to sign up for my own *Cuisine* subscription, the next is to go shopping, then it is time to start cooking. I am going to start with an easy three-course meal for six friends – including the owner of the *Cuisine* magazines.

Elizabeth Bean, Nelson

I agree with Lionel Frost's letter (issue 138) that it is difficult to flip through *Cuisine* with the different thicknesses of paper. However, I disagree with his stance on samples.

I tried the Bell Tea samples and liked the much smoother blend so much that I went out and purchased some. My guests have concurred.

I finally have a cup of tea that I really, really like. So, thank you very much for the sample.

Louise Shing, via email •

■ Due to space restrictions, all these letters have been abridged.

Saint Clair

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

These days, Marlborough is overrun with Sauvignon Blanc makers, scavenging for their share of this 21st-century gold rush. Saint Clair's Neal and Judy Ibbotson have seen them all – they began growing grapes here in 1978. Not that they were in a rush. For years, they spent their time learning the land's secrets. When they felt ready to begin making wine, in 1994, every wine from their first vintage won medals. The accolades have never stopped. In *Cuisine*'s 2009 New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc tasting, the Saint Clair Pioneer Block 3 43 Degrees Sauvignon Blanc 2009 was placed in the Top Ten with five stars, with the judges savouring its signature pungency, barnstorming palate and the enjoyable passionfruit twist in the tail.

For further information visit saintclair.co.nz

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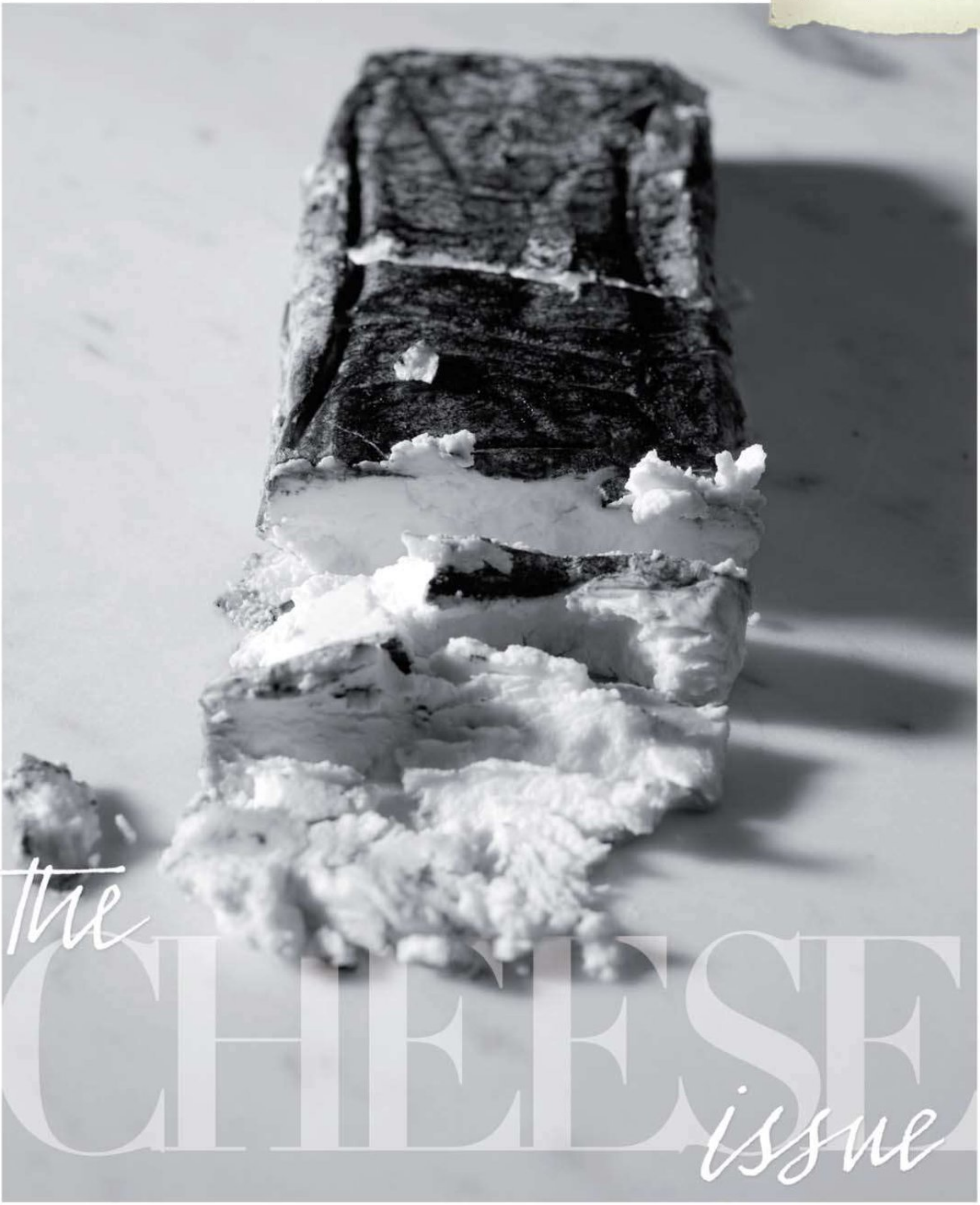

JASON CREAGHAN

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SARA BARRAUD/GETTY IMAGES

SAY HOME-MADE CHEESE

SUE ARTHUR doesn't give students at her New Zealand Cheese School courses much to go on. They are set to improvise with minimal equipment: a sink of warm water brings bottles of milk to the correct temperature; a plastic bin serves as a vat. Domestic cake racks are dragged through the curd to cut it; the whey is drained off through a slotted spoon.

The idea is to demystify the art of home cheesemaking and it continues after the course ends: students take their discs of knitted curd home and store them in little chilly-bins in their fridge, turning them every two days and watching with mounting excitement as white surface mould creates genuine farmhouse brie.

With so little equipment, Sue and partner Neil Willman are able to take their school on the road, holding classes over weekends at eight locations around the country. In 2008, 250 students went through their courses; last year the figure climbed to 330.

Sue and Neil make award-winning cheese at Over the Moon, their small factory in Putaruru, in the heart of Waikato dairy country. They also hold courses for those who wish to take the professional cheesemaking path.

Does she worry about creating business competitors? Hardly. As she points out, not with Fonterra making 96 per cent of New Zealand cheese.

DAVID BURTON

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

After battling for more than 20 years, local cheesemakers have won the right to make their cheese with unpasteurised milk when the Animal Products (Raw Milk Products Specifications) Notice 2009 was introduced.

It's momentous stuff. As Bob Berry of Whitestone Cheese says, "When you pasteurise, you're killing a lot of flavour-making bacteria and replacing that with starter cultures."

New Zealanders have been able to try the deeper flavours of unpasteurised cheese, but only a select few imported from Europe. The list currently includes roquefort, emmentaler and Parmigiano-Reggiano. New Zealand producers will have to wait a little longer to join them.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority was not expected to set out the ground rules for unpasteurised cheese production until this month; hopeful cheesemakers will then have to set up new food safety programmes and jump through a series of bureaucratic hoops before actually making cheese.

A new code of practice will specify regular testing of each animal in a milking herd and tighter monitoring of the whole process to ensure cheese safety. Restrictions on the time from milking to manufacture will effectively limit unpasteurised cheesemaking to tiny artisan operators who either have their own dairy herd, or access to the milk of a herd nearby.

In theory, a cheesemaker will be able to make pasteurised and unpasteurised cheese using the same equipment, but in practice there will have to be separate silos to store each milk and the finished cheeses can't be stored in the same room.

For many, the extra cost of compliance will be prohibitive and it's likely to force up the price of unpasteurised cheese, pushing it into a niche market. But in a country this size, asks Berry, how big will that niche be? He plans to wait and see.

New Zealand Specialist Cheesemakers Association chairperson, Diana Hawkins, predicts the first makers of unpasteurised cheese will be those with previous experience, like Albert Alferink of Mercer Cheese. She also predicts the first products will be aged hard cheeses. These are safer, since pathogens don't survive in a cheese beyond three months.

NZFSA spokesman Tony Rumney "reasonably expects" the first unpasteurised cheese to go on sale this year.

"I can't see that happening," says Hawkins. **DAVID BURTON**

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NICOLA EDMONDS

HOMAGE TO FROMAGE

In the past year, Wellington restaurants such as Arbitrageur, Le Canard and especially Ortega (reviewed page 164) have lifted the bar on cheeseboards, with selections of perfectly aged French brie, roquefort and other mature artisan cheeses now a regular occurrence on menus.

The man mostly responsible, Ludovic Avril, sales manager for Le Marché Français, has in one year helped turn his firm into New Zealand's second largest importer of French cheese.

The cheeses arrive by air freight once a fortnight, but Avril is very close to making that weekly. Air freight allows his broker at Marché de Rungis in Paris to order cheeses from all over France; two weeks later they turn up in Wellington perfectly ripened and ready to sell.

Avril also sells 20kg to the public each Sunday at Wellington's City Market, at prices only $3-$4 above their local counterparts, despite the air freight, which doubles the cost.

Le Marché is deliberately running on tight margins, Ludovic says, as it accepts smaller profits in a bid to popularise French cheeses and to get Kiwis out of the mindset of regarding them as a luxury.

If sales continue to rise and he manages to crack into the supermarket trade, Ludovic will consider emulating Australian food importers, who fill entire refrigerated shipping containers with hard cheeses and roquefort, and have the cheeses mature on the voyage out.

DAVID BURTON

Innovative chefs rise to challenge

New Zealand's chefs know what it takes to create innovative cheese dishes, says Kerry Tyack, chief judge of the 2009 Kapiti Chef Collection, a competition that challenged chefs to create an original dish using Kapiti Cheese.

"It has been a happy revelation finding well-considered, inspired cheese dishes all around the country," says Tyack. "We have experienced classic combinations given a contemporary twist; we have had brave interpretations of where cheese fits on the menu; and we have seen cheese used to bring out the best in a variety of local ingredients."

Tyack also says that chefs have found original, often clever ways to serve cheese in both hot and cold forms.

The Supreme Winner was Wellington's Hippopotamus Restaurant & Bar with Kapiti Kikorangi tortellini on creamed leek with micro salad and crisp Parma ham shavings, created by executive chef Laurent Loudeac.

FINALISTS

À Deco, Whangarei; Two Fifteen Bistro & Wine Bar, Auckland; Mount Bistro Restaurant, Mt Maunganui; Plateau Restaurant & Bar, Taupo; The General Practitioner, Wellington; The Lakes Restaurant at Clearwater, Christchurch; Two Chefs Bistro, Dunedin. (See pages 40-41 for a chance to taste the cheese dishes nationwide.)

WE FANCY

- **Caesar salad that actually has more lettuce than bacon**
- **Breakfast pies from Benzoni of Remuera – also available from Good One café, Ponsonby**
- **Meredith Dairy's ash-coated chèvre (pictured on page 17)**
- **From the makers of I Love Pies, now there's I Love Sauce – all natural tomato sauce**

JASON CREAGHAN

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CHEESEFEST

Cuisine is again proud to present the *Cuisine* NZ Champions of Cheese Awards on 2 March and you have the opportunity to try the winning cheeses at CheeseFest on 3 March from 5pm-8pm at The Langham Auckland, tickets $30 (nzca.org.nz). Meet our Artisan Awards winners (see page 43) at CheeseFest and at Auckland's Farro Fresh on 4 March.

Seafood celebration at Cable Bay Vineyards Inspired by chef William Thorpe's recent time at Rick Stein's Padstow restaurant, Cable Bay offers a daily-changing fish menu.

MARCH 5-28

New Zealand Barista Championships Regionals in Christchurch (6 March), Wellington (21 March) and Auckland (28 March) followed by the national final at The Allpress Roastery/HQ Auckland (17 April).

MARCH 6 – APRIL 17

YOU ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE ARTISAN AWARDS WINNERS AT AUCKLAND'S FARRO FRESH ON 4 MARCH

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

LIFE BEGINS AT 200

ANDREW COFFEY

"BALSAMIC VINEGAR is a noble thing because it's aged and can never be too old," says Claudio Stefani, part of the 17th generation of the Modena balsamic vinegar house Giusti. The family has been in the business for 405 years, supplied kings of Italy and won a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889, marked by the Eiffel Tower's opening.

Made from the cooked must of Trebbiano and Lambrusco grapes with good wine vinegar added, balsamic undergoes a long fermentation process in a succession of aged wooden barrels. As it evaporates, the barrels are topped up with balsamic from the previous vintage and can contain a soupçon of balsamic from 200 years ago.

"If you make it correctly, you can't know how old it is," says Stefani.

For this reason the regulatory body, the Consortium of Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, states a number cannot appear on the label, though many flout the rule. So buyer beware. The only way of knowing the good ones is research and, unfortunately, price – the more expensive, of course, being technically older.

The best pairing with good balsamic is Parmigiano-Reggiano, supporting the adage that successful matches are made with produce from the same region.

And the general rule is to not cook with the high-quality balsamics, but it's fine with the younger ones.

"But the answer," says Stefani, "is to use the one you can." **TONI MASON**

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL
PETER COLLINS

NICOLA EDMONDS

AT ORTEGA FISH SHACK BAR, chef Peter Collins works alongside owner, Mark Limacher, just as they did at Café Bastille and at Roxburgh Bistro before that. In fact, their friendship goes back 30 years, when they were apprentices at Bellamy's. Peter says the food then served in Parliament's restaurant was "old school, some of it fairly dire".

After these inauspicious beginnings, Peter went to Britain and worked for the famous Roux brothers' apprentice Peter Chandler at Paris House. Here he tasted great French cheese for the first time, confirming a lifelong passion. Later, on a tour of France with his then girlfriend, Peter got into trouble for "wasting" three nights' food budget on a single piece of roquefort. Savouring every mouthful with his eyes closed, Peter refused to share any. Perhaps not surprisingly, that relationship didn't last. But his one with cheese did.

Now married with two daughters, Peter lives at Normandale, in the Hutt Valley, on a 1600-square metre section with a stream running through it. His wife, Jo, tends a kitchen garden that teems with garlic, two types of onions, peas, beans, gherkins, rhubarb and celery. A glasshouse has chilli, capsicums, basil, and conventional and alpine strawberries.

These last go into a custard tart that Peter makes at home, while homegrown pumpkin goes into the roasting pan to caramelise around another favourite article of home cooking – the perfect roast chicken: well seasoned with sea salt, olive oil and tarragon, it is roasted just 50 minutes at 220°C- 230°C, then rested under tinfoil with the breast down, so all the juices drain through it.
DAVID BURTON

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Raising THE BAR

THE SMITH SIAM is a heady and refreshing mix of 42 Below passionfruit vodka with muddled fresh ginger, lime and coriander, and lemongrass-infused sugar syrup, topped up with ginger beer. You'll find it at Smith Bar behind Auckland's Britomart in a setting reminiscent of colonial bars in the Far East crossed with a tidy opium den. The perfect way to transport yourself.

KEN DOWNIE

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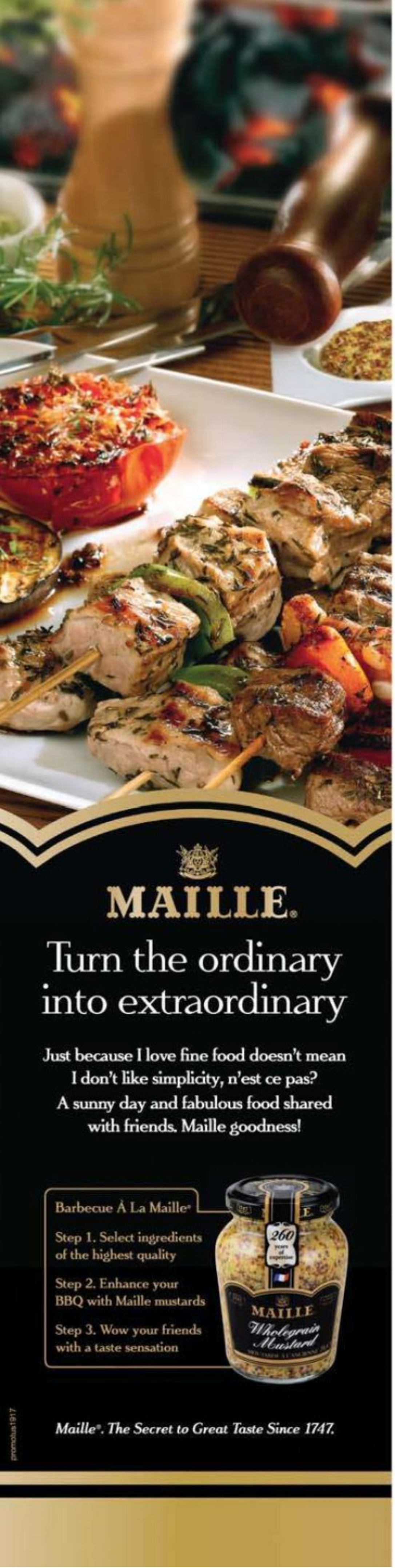

Simon Johnson

Born and raised in Auckland's Takapuna, former chef Simon Johnson changed the face of food retail in Sydney when he opened Australia's specialist first in-store fromagerie in 1992. He now has eight specialist food retail stores in the lucky country.

UNDER THE GRILL

WHEN DID YOU FIRST KNOW FOOD WAS YOUR THING? At an early age, in boarding school when you had to eat to survive...

WHAT'S YOUR FIRST FOOD MEMORY? When we were young kids and travelling as a family, we were exposed to the beautiful cultures and food in Asia and Europe.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL DINNER PARTY MENU? It is definitely about seasonality – great seasonal produce, beautiful protein (whether it be fish or meat) and seasoned with delicious ingredients. Simplicity is the key!

WHO WOULD BE YOUR DREAM DINNER GUESTS? Shaun Gladwell (Australian artist), Antonio Carluccio (Italian chef) and Rene Papa (German tenor).

WHAT'S YOUR IDEA OF THE WORST FOOD CRIME? Renaming Vegemite.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DEATH ROW DINNER? Oscietra caviar followed by truffle sandwiches in industrial quantities. It may be death by caviar and truffles!

YOUR PICK OF FOOD DESTINATION/S? Spain for the tapas and innovative cuisine, Italy for tradition and Morocco for its heavenly spices.

WHO IS YOUR FOOD HERO? Joan Campbell (legendary former food director of *Vogue Entertaining + Travel*).

WHAT'S COMING NEXT IN THE FOOD WORLD? It's less about additives, foam and froth, and more about natural and organic products.

WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD? To move to the organic, free-range farm.

NOW WE'RE SMOKING

It seems so simple and tastes so good, it's a wonder no one else seems to have come up with the idea. Neville and Rachael Kenealy's manuka-smoked eggs (they are still raw) are delicious hard-boiled in salads, but also make subtly smoky omelettes, quiches or frittatas, and are great scrambled. Poaching, however, leaches the flavour into the water.

The eggs are cold-smoked for six hours at 12°C in a special smoker. The process turns the shells brown and imparts a distinct manuka flavour to the egg inside.

Now they have perfected the process, the Kenealys, who have a farm in Central Otago, would like to open factories in both the North and South Islands to supply fresh, smoked eggs nationwide.

Ph: 03-485 9660

CHARMIAN SMITH

CHARMIAN SMITH

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Paneton's frozen croissants and pains au chocolat that prove over-night to give true French, light-as-air breakfast treats are now available direct from the bakery in Auckland's Halsey St. All you have to do is wake up and bake.

TRAFFIC

Indian restaurant M in Auckland's Grey Lynn closed in December and owners Naresh and Gita Solanki are taking a break. The premises will host a new pizza and pasta place.

Life must be tough for Wellington's 40-plus Indian restaurants, especially as they seem to offer much the same Muglai repertoire. But new places keep opening: Elixir replaces the Hong Kong Café in Taranaki St, while Courtenay Taj takes over from the ill-fated Reet Indian Restaurant on Courtenay Place, which survived only a few months.

The disused Rangiora railway station is now home to Café de la Gare. Russian-born owner Nelly Bekritskaia spent her formative years in France and Gallic flair has been applied to the menu, which features beautifully cooked and styled dishes.

The part of Christchurch's Oxford Terrace known as The Strip received a boost just before Christmas with the opening of the Bangalore Polo Club. It is a-swagger with portraits of chaps in tropical kit and jewelled Indian moguls. The fit-out was done by Tom Skyring with details authenticated by local polo player Roddy Wood.

The architects and builders of the new Novotel hotel in Cathedral Square are being praised for their melding of the new building with the façade of the historic Warners Hotel. The new hotel restaurant and bar will be headed by executive chef Trevor Griggs.

Mark Lane, ex-owner of High Tide restaurant, is now executive chef at the Otago Polytechnic School of Hospitality function centre in Dunedin. He's sharpening his knives as he looks forward to catering for top-end dinners through to simple barbecues.

Andrew Osborne, former owner of Grey Lynn's Delicious, has opened a café in Wellesley St, Auckland, serving food with a healthy twist. It's called Groucho's. We wonder why.

Now you're cooking *without* gas!

Here's a table-top cooker that does it all: A succulent wine infused roast, char-grilled eye fillet, garlic prawns, paella, lamb kofta, anything – right on the table, with no smoke and no mess. And it's safe. You can pick it up and move it while it's cooking. Fuel is new low-emission GreenFire that lights up in just two minutes. Ordinary BBQ briquettes can also be used. See more on this revolutionary cooking system at **www.cobb.net.nz**, or call us on **0800 442 860**

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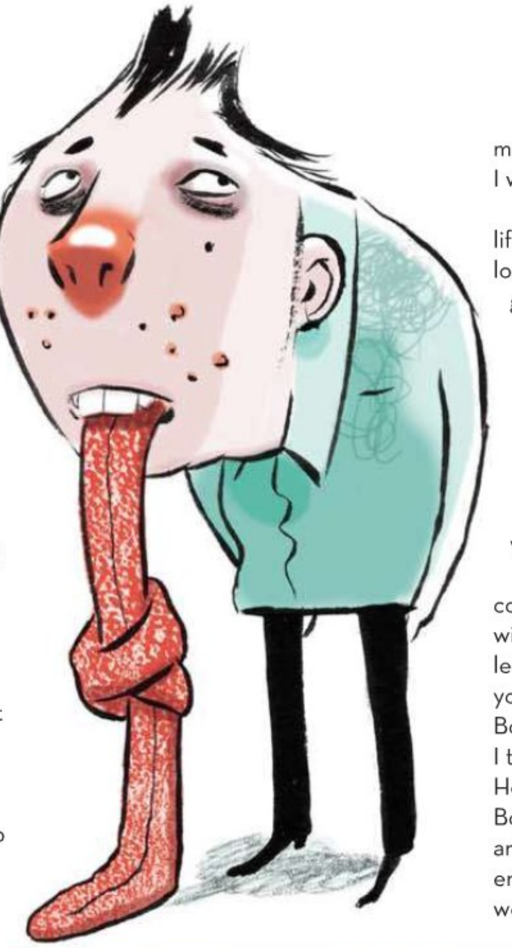
THE telltale HEARTS

RALPH KYTE-POWELL EMPATHISES WITH THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS ON FIRST DATES



She was about 18, he was a bit older. They looked lost in the grand dining room, nervous about doing the right thing. She ordered a creamy cocktail, he had a beer. The drinks eased a little of their anxiety. They fidgeted and tried not to stare too hard at one another, enjoying the thrill of young love, but discomfited by such desire. The old-school waiters indulged their innocence with kindly smiles. The groovy waiters treated them with thinly disguised contempt. It was Valentine's Day and the restaurant was crowded with couples undergoing the same exciting, frightening rite of passage.

It is an odd time for restaurants, with an avalanche of bookings for tables of two and a high proportion have little experience of dining out. Young patrons can be confounded by unknown dishes ("I'll have the steak tartare medium to well done"). Waiters rue the fact that this lovey-dovey crowd don't tip.

A first date at a restaurant is a big step on the road to grown-up stuff. The thought takes me back to the thrilling awfulness of my own late-adolescent romances. Getting a girl to go out with me was a challenge of Olympian proportions. The telephone call was the terrifying first step. With a word she could lift your spirits stratospherically, or cast you to the depths.

DARON PARTON

Invariably one of her parents answered. Mothers were a better bet than fathers, but not by much. "Could I speak to Julia, please?" said I. "And who may I say is calling?" said her dad. "Oh... it's Ralph here... um..." "And what is it in connection to?" said he. I was sweating now. "Er... I'd like to... um..." I was losing the last shreds of composure. "Okay, I'll see if she's available," he said, letting me off the hook, What a sadistic brute. By the time I spoke to Julia I was a rambling buffoon; stupidities tumbled out of my mouth and I could feel Julia's initial kindliness towards me evaporating.

Getting past the parents on the phone was too much for my friend Paul. He had a stutter. If he felt at ease it disappeared, but when stressed, or if the focus was on him alone, his stutter became a major social impediment. Ringing a girl to ask her out was a sure precursor to a severe attack of the stutters.

He once rang a girl and her mum answered. "Hello," she said. Paul was shaking as he started to speak. "C-c-can I sp-sp-sp... ca-ca-ca-fa-fa-fa..." She hung up. Paul waited a few minutes and rang again. "Da-da-da-d-d-oh-oh." "Go away and stop bothering us," said the mother. He was persistent and tried calling again. "P-p-p-ple-pahl-p-p..." "Listen, you pervert, if you don't leave us alone I'm calling the police," declared the mum. Poor Paul became reconciled to a life of celibacy.

My problems weren't as severe as Paul's, but the phone call remained a major problem until I hit on a solution. I would write a script.

I got scribbling. "Hi there, Julia. How's life? I was just thinking how cool you looked on the bus the other day. I think glasses make a girl more mysterious. I always like girls for their minds, not their bodies anyway. What do you like to do in your spare time?"

"What a coincidence. I'm an art lover, too." Nauseating ingratiation was the order of the day and soon I was ready. But what if her response wasn't predicted by the script?

I made the scripts more elaborate to cover all possibilities. I made charts with introductory remarks and arrows leading to possible replies. "What do you think of Roger Moore as James Bond?" had arrows leading to "Yes, I think he's the best ever" or "I agree. He's simply terrible" or "I hate James Bond films, too". One page became six, arrows went this way and that, brackets enclosed pertinent phrases, notes were in different-coloured inks, pages for this or that eventuality. It looked like a battlefield plan for D-Day. I just hoped she wouldn't hear me shuffling papers.

He had me so nervous that by the time I spoke to his daughter I was a rambling buffoon; stupidities tumbled out of my mouth

Scripted and rehearsed, I'd even changed my speech to a sort of upper-crust accent, like David Niven, but in a husky drawl intended to sound urbane.

I tried Julia. Her mum sounded impressed due to some toady remarks I had scripted under the heading "Mother" (I had notes about football and so on under "Father"). Julia wasn't as easy. "Are you all right?" she asked. "What's happened to your voice? Have you got a cold?" I was stopped in my tracks, but decided to push on. "What sort of music do you like?" "I love Duran Duran, too." And so it went. She agreed to go to a movie with me. Hooray.

The night was looking good. It was not to be. I picked her up and she started chatting, but my replies didn't excite her interest. I rambled and dithered. There were uncomfortable pauses broken only by her uninterested sighs. But hope springs eternal and I asked if I could see her again. She delivered the line every male suitor hates. "Let's just be friends," she said. "It's just that you seemed so much more interesting on the phone."

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Back pain is so common, you'd imagine it's a fairly trivial problem. Until it happens to you, and then you discover:

- Back pain really hurts
- It prevents you from doing things you always took for granted
- And unless you take steps to manage it, it could take over your life

Why me?

It's estimated that eight out of ten people are afflicted by back pain at some time in their lives[1]. Back, neck or shoulder pain is usually the result of a sprain or spasm in a muscle or ligament[2]. And that can happen for any number of reasons: poor posture, lack of exercise or fitness, being overweight, remaining still for long periods (for example, at your desk or in the car).

So back pain can severely limit your ability to enjoy and get on with life. Even if your bout of back pain isn't this crippling, you could still find that your quality of life suffers. Everyday routines and even sleeping could be affected.

Am I stuck with back pain permanently?

Fortunately there's a lot you can do to combat back pain. By keeping fit, stretching, watching your posture when standing, sitting and working, and not sitting still for too long you may be able to avoid back pain altogether.

If back pain has struck already, this advice still applies. A day or two of bed rest may be necessary after the onset of back pain, but after that some activity is advisable to keep your back relaxed and supple.

What else can I do?

Some further forms of treatment may be helpful, such as:

Physical therapies – massage, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy or osteopathy

Pain management techniques – relaxation, meditation, visualisation

Medication – oral analgesics (pain relievers), gels and ointments

One form of analgesic that may prove particularly beneficial is Panadol Back + Neck Long Lasting. Unlike standard paracetamol, it is a sustained release formulation that provides effective temporary relief from persistent back, neck and shoulder pain for up to eight hours. The longer lasting pain relief and the convenient three times a day dosing makes Panadol Back + Neck Long Lasting particularly suitable for the long-term relief of back, neck and shoulder pain.

What's more, Panadol Back + Neck is suitable for people with stomach ulcers, breastfeeding mothers and asthmatics sensitive to aspirin and NSAIDs (eg ibuprofen).

See your health professional

Always discuss your back problem with your health professional before following any course of treatment.

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References: 1. Better Health fact sheet: Back pain. http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles/nsf/pages/back_pain 2. Understanding Muscle and Joint Pain Study, TLE, 2007.

Consumer Medicine Information: Panadol® Back and Neck Long Lasting contains Paracetamol 665mg per Caplet®. Pharmacy Medicine. Use: For temporary relief of persistent pain. Precaution: Equally space dosage within a day. Medicines have benefits and some can have risks. Always read the label and use strictly as directed. Incorrect use can be harmful. If symptoms persist or you have side effects see your healthcare professional. GSK Consumer Healthcare, Auckland. Panadol® and Caplets® are registered trade marks of the GlaxoSmithKline group of companies. TAPS NA3919.

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AARON McLEAN

in season
EGGPLANTS

From its home on the Indian subcontinent, the well-travelled eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) has become a feature of cuisines from the Mediterranean to Japan. Hugely versatile and with a remarkable ability to soak up other flavours, this vegetable (actually, it's a fruit) is closely related to tomatoes and potatoes.

The many varieties range from white and pale green through to flushed pink, violet and purple-black; from pea-sized to the large varieties found in our shops; they can be round, egg-shaped, slender ovals or oblong. Look for fruit that is heavy for its size, blemish-free and with a shiny, taut skin. It has a slightly bitter flavour raw but when cooked the flesh becomes creamy and is mild in taste.

Older recipes often call for eggplant to be salted for 30 minutes, rinsed and dried before cooking to leach out the bitterness. Modern varieties have bred out the bitterness so it is unnecessary to purge the eggplant from a tasting viewpoint, but it can still be useful as a way to remove moisture – this gives the eggplant a better texture and it soaks up less oil or fat during cooking.

Eggplant can be used in a variety of ways: sautéed (ratatouille, moussaka), stuffed and baked (with minced lamb and spices), puréed, fried (caponata), grilled (it gives the eggplant a great meaty texture), stewed, steamed and even battered and deep-fried. It is particularly delicious baked with a miso glaze. In the sublime baba ghanoush, the eggplant is often baked or heated over an open flame until the skin is charred to impart a smoky flavour, then skinned and mashed or puréed.

It also makes a delicious pickle and is a fabulous addition to curries.

GINNY GRANT

Go Otago, Taieri Agricultural Park, Mosgiel, go-otago.org.nz

MARCH 21

The Food Show, Westpac Arena, Christchurch Chefs include Lauraine Jacobs, Al Brown, Peta Mathias, Sophie Gray, Ray McVinnie, Annabelle White and Julie Biuso. Adults $18, tickets at gate or from foodshow.co.nz

MARCH 26-28

Marchfest, Nelson Celebrating the creative acts of making beer, wine, food and music. Ten craft beers will be created especially for the event, each by a different brewery, marchfest.com

APRIL 17

essential cuisine
'the essence of fine cuisine'

French Onion Soup

Prep 10 minutes
Cook 50 minutes
Serves 6

Soup:
4 large onions, preferably brown
50g butter
½ cup water
3 tbsp flour
3 cups water
*1kg **Essential Cuisine Beef Stock***
Optional: 2 tbsp port
1½ tsp salt and ½ tsp ground black pepper

Garnish: *250g haloumi cheese cut in thin slices or cheese croutons (18 rounds of French bread and 150g Gruyère cheese, grated)*

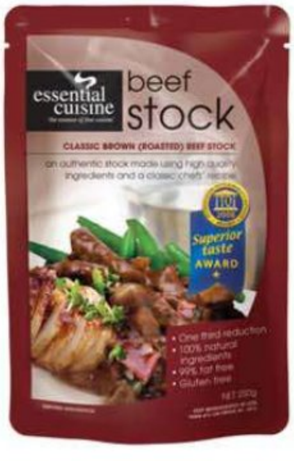
Crispy Pesto French Bread:
French loaf
*¼ cup **Essential Cuisine Basil Pesto***
¼ cup olive oil

To prepare soup: Peel onions and slice very thinly, discarding the tough part of the root (the slicer blade on a food processor makes a fast job of this). Place onions in a 3 litre capacity pot with butter and ½ cup of water. Cover tightly and cook over medium low heat for 40 minutes, checking after 30 minutes that onions are not catching on the bottom of pot. Mix in flour, increase heat to medium and cook another 10 minutes, stirring now and then. Add a further 3 cups of water, ***Essential Cuisine Beef Stock*** and port if using. Stir and bring to a simmer. Season with salt and pepper and simmer for 10 minutes.

To prepare haloumi garnish: Fry haloumi slices in a lightly oiled pan until golden on each side.
If garnishing soup with cheese croutons, cut 18 slices of French bread about 1cm thick. Spread on a baking tray, lightly toast and cover generously with grated Gruyère cheese. Grill until cheese bubbles.

Spoon soup into 6 serving bowls. Divide fried haloumi over each serving, or place a cheese crouton onto each bowl and serve the rest of the croutons on a plate for people to help themselves.

To prepare crispy pesto french bread: Cut a French loaf in half lengthwise and then each half into 3 pieces. Mix ¼ cup ***Essential Cuisine Basil Pesto*** with ¼ cup olive oil. Place bread on a baking tray, cut side up and brush with pesto oil mix. Bake at 250°C for about 5 minutes or until golden and crunchy.



Recipe by Annabel Langbein
www.annabel-langbein.com

*Look for us in the cold shelf or butchery department in leading supermarkets and fine food outlets or go to **www.essentialcuisine.co.nz***

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Ciya

Fish sellers

Istanbul

FIONA SMITH FINDS SOME OF THE GEMS

Istanbul is heaving with sensational restaurants. But, as the city caters to hordes of tourists, its beautiful streets are packed with restaurants that look inviting but only underwhelm. On a recent visit I went instead to these gems.

CIYA SOFRASI

This was recommended by a Turkish friend and was everything he said it would be. To get there we took a 15-minute ferry ride to Kadikoy on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, where there is a far less touristy feel and great streets with markets and food shops. Head over early and have a walk around, then settle in for the afternoon. Three restaurants on the same street make up Ciya, two kebab kofteci (bread and meat) and a sofrasi (soups, salads and stews). Chef-owner Musa Dagdeviren is a pioneer of the new Anatolian cooking, combining almost forgotten traditional recipes with influences from beyond Turkey's borders. Many dishes here can't be found anywhere else in Turkey. Open for lunch only.
Guneslibahce Sokak 43A, Kadikoy, ph: 216-330 3190, ciya.com.tr

NIELS SCHIPPER

BUHARA OCAKBASI

I really liked Buhara Ocakbasi in Sultanahmet, just east of the Grand Bazaar. It is casual and serves the most delicious food. You'll find the specialities in many other restaurants in the area, but not made to this quality and with this panache. The hummus was great and I especially enjoyed the ali nazik (smoked eggplant with ground lamb and yoghurt) served with a very finely chopped salad of tomatoes, red onion, parsley and lots of sour sumac.
Nuruosmaniye Caddesi 7, Sultanahmet, ph: 212-527 5133

BEREKET SOFRASI

Hard to find, but an experience that defines a great trip, Bereket Sofrasi is a tiny little place just outside one of the entrances to the Grand Bazaar. It is dominated by a woodfire oven that produces the most tantalising fresh breads, lahmacun, Turkish pizza and other dishes. My travel companion declared it to be the best lunch he'd ever eaten, everything tasted fantastic and it was really cheap.
Tigcilar Sok Number 76
Kapalicarsi Mercan Cikisi

CHEAP EATS

For cheap quick bites, the **fish sellers** down by the ferries near the Egyptian bazaar do great fish sandwiches. Working off ornately decorated fishing boats that rock dramatically as fresh fish is seared on huge hot plates, it's a snack with stacks of atmosphere. Simplicity itself, just fish, bread, lettuce, onion and, if you are lucky, a slice of tomato, it's made even more delicious with the purchase of a cup of pickles from a nearby vendor.

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WIN a weekend at Huka Lodge with Cuisine

TRAVEL WITH THREE FRIENDS IN THE NEW MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS TO A WEEKEND AT ALAN PYE COTTAGE, VALUED AT OVER $11,000

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The beautifully appointed, exclusive, riverside Alan Pye Cottage is the latest luxury experience offered by Huka Lodge in Taupo and boasts two double bedrooms with limestone-floored en suites, a magnificent open plan living/dining room, study, outdoor pavilion with log fire, heated infinity pool, spa pool and personal chef.

The winner and their three guests will have full use of a new Mercedes-Benz E-Class sedan to drive to the Lodge (from their choice of Auckland or Wellington) and to use during their two-night stay.

They will also enjoy pre-dinner drinks, gourmet five-course dinners, full country breakfasts and use of all Lodge facilities.

> hukalodge.co.nz

> mercedes-benz.co.nz

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Entries must be received before 26 April 2010.

Please see page 174 for terms and conditions.

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SIT DOWN WITH US AT THREE **CUISINE**-AWARD-WINNING RESTAURANTS

We are delighted to invite readers to celebrate with us at these winning restaurants from the 2009 *Cuisine* NZ Restaurant of the Year Awards, held in association with Mercedes-Benz. Special set menus will embody the individual styles and high standards that so impressed our judges, with all courses matched to excellent wines.

TICKETS Reservations are on a first-in, first-served basis so book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets go on sale from midday, Friday 19 February. For more information and menus see cuisine.co.nz

BEST SMART DINING REGIONAL WINNER

BOUTEREY'S

6.30pm Thursday 11 March
251 Queen St, Richmond, Nelson
PRICE $140 ($100 without wine)
50 places
BOOKINGS ph: 03-544 1114
(Tania Bouterey)

The passion of Matt and Tania Bouterey shines through in their streetfront restaurant tucked into the middle of provincial Richmond. Their six-course dégustation menu – matched predominantly to Nelson wines – will make full use of Nelson's outstanding local produce, including ingredients from the Bautereys' farm, and for seasonal reasons may be subject to change.

The menu includes: foie gras and organic chicken liver parfait with quince jelly; panko-crumbed and velouté of Nelson oysters; smoked eel and apple salad with tomato, basil and celery consommé; crayfish croquette and salsa with truffled pea purée and crayfish mayo; thyme seared, panko-crumbed heart of lamb with aubergine caviar and tomato ragù; iced rhubarb and pistachio parfait with vanilla and Pinot ice-cream.

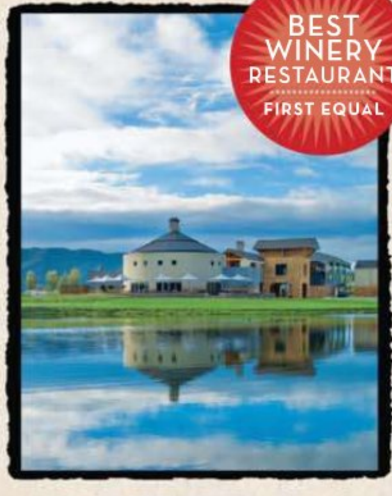
TERRÔIR AT CRAGGY RANGE

7pm Friday 19 March
253 Waimarama Rd, Havelock North
PRICE $175
40 places
BOOKINGS ph: 06-873 0413
(Crystal Collins)

Head chef Leyton Ashley and consulting chef David Griffiths (of Huka Lodge fame) will combine to present a special dégustation menu using some of the best Hawke's Bay produce, while Craggy Range director of wine, Steve Smith MW, will present Craggy Range Single Vineyard wines to accompany each of the four courses.

Wood-smoked scampi and heirloom tomatoes will be followed by duck confit with estate-grown Terrôir salad. Then Craggy Range's flagship wine, Sophia 2007, will be accompanied by a roasted short loin of rose veal and crumbed veal sweetbreads. To finish, apple tart will be matched to the new release Craggy Range Fletcher Family Vineyard Noble Riesling 2009.

BEST WINERY RESTAURANT FIRST EQUAL



BEST WINERY RESTAURANT FIRST EQUAL

PEGASUS BAY

12.30pm Saturday 27 March
263 Stockgrove Rd, Waipara
PRICE $150
60 places
BOOKINGS 021-579 905
(Belinda Donaldson)

The Donaldson family makes some of Waipara's most prized wines and the food to match them is equally prized. Chef Oliver Jackson concentrates on crafting seasonal produce, often sourced from the property or gathered at the local farmers' market.

After canapés to start, the family will host a three-course feasting menu – a concept they love at Pegasus Bay. For each course a selection of dishes is served along the table and matched to two aged Pegasus Bay wines, allowing each guest to feast on the variety of shared plates. Where possible, organic produce is used.

Look out for the main of whole Muscovy duck, braised and crisp-fried, sour-cherry Pinot jus with rocket, fennel bulb, orange, parsley, mint and pine nut salad and potatoes dauphinoise matched to Pegasus Bay Pinot Noir.

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A APERITIVO PERONI

PERONI

Aperitivo is a long standing Italian tradition which brings friends together for a pre-dinner drink, simply to sip something good, enjoy each other's company, and chat about the night ahead.

Served with antipasti, ranging from prosciutto to olives, bruschette, fresh pizza and seasonal vegetables, Aperitivo is designed to whet the appetite for the upcoming meal. Indeed, the word "aperitivo" comes from the Latin term "aperire" meaning opening, in this case signifying stimulating one's hunger.

Italy's fashion capital, Milan, is said to be the home of Aperitivo and the most sophisticated bars feature an "Aperitivo time" between 6 and 8 in the evening. Here you'll find a vibrant crowd enjoying "la dolce vita" as only the Italians can.

The authentically Italian beer's crisp and refreshing character, coupled with its delicate flavour, make it the perfect accompaniment for Aperitivo.

Peroni is hosting Aperitivo Peroni in selected bars and restaurants around Auckland. Keep an eye out for it. Salute!

PERONI
ITALY

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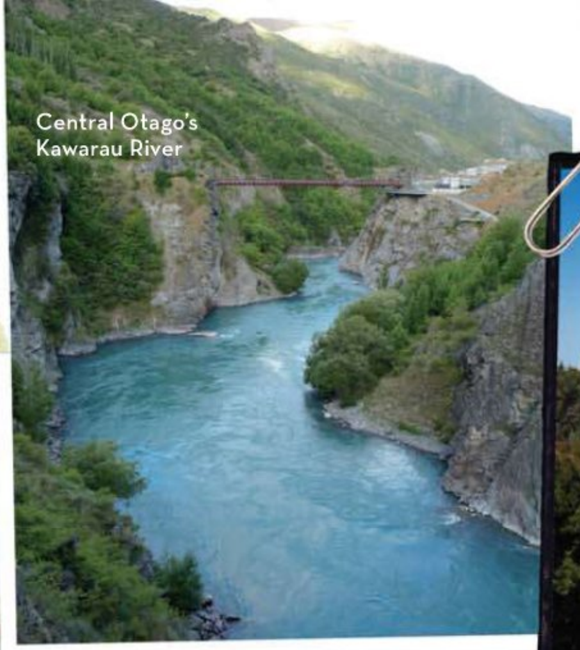
Site seen

Sherrington Grange cheese



Central Otago's Kawarau River

Peacock Sky

NIGEL GARDINER

Marlborough's "big cheese" has teamed up with local wineries to launch a new wine and cheese trail. Standout cheesemonger Sherrington Grange has paired four of its artisanal cheeses with wines from well-known producers including Huia and Forrest. They'll deliver the cheeses to your hotel on the morning of the tour with a knife, homemade bread and crackers, plus directions from winery to winery. Alternatively, you can swap the grape for the grain with a beer and cheese tasting at Moa brewery. $35 for two. marlboroughcheesetrails.co.nz **REBECCA GIBB**

STEVE & JEMMA COPLEY

A new walking and cycle track along Central Otago's Kawarau River opens in April. The 6km Gibbston River Trail winds from the bungy bridge past the Winehouse & Kitchen, and Peregrine Wines, as well as many archaeological sites. An extension planned to follow later in the year will take the path all the way to the Waitiri Creek winery further along the Gibbston Valley. **REBECCA GIBB**

Opening in April for tastings, nature walks and take-your-own picnics is the cellar door at the new Peacock Sky (the bush-fringed vineyard is home to a flock of peacocks) at Waiheke Island's Onetangi. Former chef and co-owner, Canadian Connie Festa, is keen to give visitors an insight into food and wine pairings. A guest cottage and apartment will open later in the year. The Tasting Room, ph: 021-300 387, peacocksky.co.nz **SUSAN BUCHANAN**

OZ CLARKE'S EXHORTATION TO KIWI PINOT PRODUCERS: "PINOT NOIR MUST NOW LEAD THE FIGHT... FOR THE SAKE OF NEW ZEALAND'S HARD-WON REPUTATION"

PINOT NOIR NEW ZEALAND 2010, WELLINGTON

SHELF LIFE

SULPHUR RELIEF

When people experience allergic reactions to wine, the culprit is often sulphur dioxide (SO_2), commonly used by winemakers as a preservative. It can trigger hayfever-like symptoms severe enough for sufferers to decide to turn their back on Bacchus.

Help is now here in the form of Australian-developed SO_2GO, an oxidising agent that neutralises sulphur dioxide in wine. The addition of 3ml of SO_2GO to a bottle will reduce SO_2 levels by up to 80 per cent, without compromising taste.

So far, it's exclusive to Taupo's Scenic Cellars and reaction has been positive, reports executive director Ian Isaacs.

"People who'd get headaches after one glass tell us they can now drink headache-free. It's come along at the right time, as we've noticed an upswing in people asking for preservative-free wine." sceniccellars.co.nz

JOHN SAKER

2010 wine calendar

MARCH 6
Waipara Wine & Food Celebration Glenmark Church, Church Rd, Waipara. waiparawine.co.nz

MARCH 20
Gibbston Harvest Festival Gibbston Valley Station Includes wine-tasting master classes. gibbstonharvestfestival.com

MARCH 20
Wairarapa Wines Harvest Festival Riverside at the Cliffs, Dakins Rd, Gladstone. wairarapawines.co.nz

MARCH 21
Round the Vines A run/walk through Martinborough's vineyards in support of local schools. Tastings and entertainment along the route. roundthevines.org.nz

APRIL 3-5
Berba Soljans Wines, Kumeu Wine Country, hosts the annual Croatian harvest festival. soljans.co.nz

APRIL 4
Clyde Wine & Food Harvest Festival All along Clyde's main drag. promotedunstan.org.nz

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WINE PEOPLE

SCOTT HAMMOND / MARLBOROUGH EXPRESS

"RED" ROSS REMEMBERED

Ross Lawson was a doer, a radical, a wine pioneer, an early player in the rise of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and a leader in the screwcap revolution. His death in 2009 was widely mourned and now, in his honour, Lawson's has released a special range called The Pioneer. His wife, Barbara, said there was only one option for the colour for the labels: "For an old leftie like Ross, it was always going to be red." JOHN SAKER

THE MYSTERIOUS MARIE ZÉLIE

SHE HAS a very fine and expensive Martinborough Pinot Noir named after her, but who was she? Martinborough Vineyard has released its 2006 Marie Zélie Pinot Noir, the second edition of this prestige label and a feminine, sensual follow-up to the 2003. French-born Marie Zélie Hermance Beetham (née Frère) strongly influenced her husband William's pioneer winemaking in 19th-century Wairarapa, but so very little is known about her, in part because she was childless. No mystery, though, given what we know of her contribution, that her name is attached to this exquisite vinous issue. JOHN SAKER

THE FERMENT

For their consistently revered Pinot Noirs, Ata Rangi (Martinborough) and Felton Road (Central Otago) became inaugural winners of a special award at the Pinot Noir 2010 celebration. The reputation of Pinot producers as misty-eyed dreamers didn't match the winners' words of acknowledgement. "We've had our feet on the ground," said Ata Rangi founder Clive Paton. Felton Road's Nigel Greening was every bit as earthbound. "It's the dirt."

Former Montana chief winemaker Jeff Clarke has resurfaced at the new Marlborough winery Marisco. "I picked the title of business development manager... it's an upmarket version of Jack-of-all-trades," he says.

With Central Otago legend Rudi Bauer a nominee for the "Oscar of wine", the prestigious Der Feinschmecker award, it reminded the Quartz Reef winemaker of our first Oscar winner. "If for some reason I win, I'll be like Anna Paquin... I won't know what to say."

Mark this result from the inaugural Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine and Spirit Competition. Wairau River Pinot Gris 2009 won the award for Best Wine with Dim Sum.

Who will be our next Master Sommelier? Our money's on Michael Bancks. The top student from the 2008 Court of Master Sommelier programme won the Wither Hills Master Sommelier Scholarship and is travelling to the UK to attempt the Advanced Sommelier Certificate.

Mike Brown has left Waimea Estates to become CEO of Tohu Wines. JOHN SAKER

PERONI

A APERITIVO PERONI

Peroni invites you to try a selection of aperitivo recipes at home.

FOCACCIA ALLA RUCOLA, BURRATA E OLIO
FOCACCIA WITH ROCKET PUREE, BURRATA CHEESE & OLIVE OIL

1 burrata (250g)
Handful of fresh rocket
300g plain focaccia
120g extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper

Serves 6

Hand blend the rocket leaves with the olive oil until pureed. Warm up the focaccia in the oven and cut into 5cm x 3cm strips. Spread the rocket puree on top of the focaccia and place a slice of burrata on top and drizzle with olive oil. Season to taste.

CROSTONE DI 'NDUJA
FOCACCIA SQUARES WITH 'NDUJA SALAMI

'Nduja is a soft, spicy, spreadable salami considered one of the most famous of typical calabrian foods. It is made with pork meat, a bit of fat, salt and a lot of red pepper.

100g 'nduja
300g onion focaccia
Olive oil

Slice the focaccia into a 7cm x 2.5cm strip and gently warm up the bread in the oven. Gently spread a very thin layer of 'nduja on top of the focaccia.

PERONI ITALY

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AT HOME AND IN THE MOOD

Luke Mangan

New Holland, $69 h/b

I have three gripes with this otherwise excellent book. I loathe the title, I could have done without the 20-plus photos of the author – maybe he's in the mood for a bit of self-gratification – but the worst aspect is the very shoddy edit the book has received. Typos are one thing, but instructions need to be accurate. If you're making the very tasty-sounding Saigon sandwich (bahn mi) you do need to know that the pork shoulder is roasted whole and not sliced thinly as the ingredient list would lead you to believe.

It's a shame because this is a great book for home cooks from one of Australia's most respected chefs and restaurateurs. The appealing recipes use readily available ingredients and cover every occasion – such as the relaxed breakfast section and a lunch section that focuses on fabulous sandwiches and fillings. Mangan elevates the toasted sandwich and offers some divine-looking wraps (I'm looking forward to making the mu shu chicken wrap). There are also great soups, deliciously simple salads with interesting dressings and excellent recipes for barbecues, seafood and meat. The Asian-inspired dishes are easily achievable and the book is rounded off with some classic puddings.

GINNY GRANT

THE ITALIAN COOKERY COURSE

Katie Caldesi

New Holland, $79.99 h/b

My bookshelf is so dominated by Italian cookbooks that for some time I have been wondering how many more one can collect. Yet I could easily squeeze this one in.

Comprehensive and densely packed with information, it boasts excellent sidebars – in the fish section you are shown how to clean and fillet flat and round fish, and how to prepare and cook octopus, monkfish, mussels and clams, crab, lobster, anchovies and sardines. The bread and pasta sections are excellent and there is a wealth of information on Italian products, culture and regional dishes. And the photography is gorgeous.

As well as the classics, the delightful recipes – with excellent headnotes that provide further information or historical background – include lesser-known treats. I'd happily give this to someone who wanted to learn about Italian cuisine, but also to the experienced cook for the gems to further their knowledge.

GINNY GRANT

CHANCERS AND VISIONARIES: A HISTORY OF WINE IN NEW ZEALAND

Keith Stewart, Random House, $49.99 p/b

Keith Stewart says in the introduction that he has been writing this book his entire adult life. It is certainly long overdue: before this the history of New Zealand wine was shoehorned into spaces hardly fit to hold a handful of vintage records.

Well researched and well illustrated, the work displays Stewart's fascination with his subject and bears the stamp of his singular perspectives.

Stewart rightly throws a full beam on the contribution made by the talented Hungarian-born and trained viticulturist Denis Kasza. The original champion of Chardonnay in New Zealand, Kasza's contribution has been long neglected.

The current wine crisis, fuelled by an oversupply of Sauvignon Blanc, is dealt with in depth; Stewart correctly identifies a tension between quality-driven artisans and money-driven mass production – a recurrent theme in New Zealand wine. It is disconcerting, though, to have what is arguably those artisans' finest expression, our best Pinot Noir, dismissingly described as the "industry's trendiest achievement".

JOHN SAKER

CHOCOLATE: A GLOBAL HISTORY

Sarah Moss and Alec Badenoch, Reaktion Books, $49.99 h/b

CHEESE: A GLOBAL HISTORY

Andrew Dalby, Reaktion Books, $49.99 h/b

This latest pair in the Edible Series makes for fascinating and informative reading. There is a slightly academic tone, but unlike many other books of their ilk, they are engaging and a joy to read. And they have recipes. (Also new in the series is a book on curry.)

In *Chocolate* we find that the solid products so omnipresent today are relatively recent developments and that for centuries it was only used as a drink. We also discover why chocolate has long been promoted to women and how it moved out of the realm of the rich and powerful to become universally available, at least in the West, and why the percentage of cocoa solids in your chocolate may not necessarily be an indicator of its quality.

The intensive labour involved in turning cacao pods into chocolate saw slavery and exploitation become almost the norm. Poor pay and conditions are still rife but, fortunately, fair-trade grown chocolate is now one of the fastest-growing market segments.

Cheese takes us on another history tour, involving many of the world's most desirable cheeses.

Quotes from Greek and Roman scholars are peppered throughout, along with interesting snippets such as how Samuel Pepys saved his parmesan during the Great Fire of London. A great read without a whiff of stuffiness.

GINNY GRANT

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1 x 23cm skillet
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1 x 20cm round casserole
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1 x 26cm rectangular dish
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4 x ramekins
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LE CREUSET

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THE 2009 KAPITI CHEF COLLECTION

THE 2009 KAPITI CHEF COLLECTION

KAPITI™ EVERY PIECE A NEW ZEALAND ORIGINAL

TASTE THE DISHES

As part of the 2009 Kapiti Chef Collection, 35 restaurant menus are offering until 30 March the cheese-inspired dishes entered in this nationwide competition. Bookings are advised. The Supreme Winner was Wellington's Hippopotamus Restaurant & Bar. Seven finalists also reached the final judging round (see page 19 for full list).

NORTHLAND

À Deco *70 Kamo Rd, Whangarei, ph: 09-459 4957*
Lunch *Wed-Fri from 12pm*
Dinner *Tues-Sat from 6pm*
Entrée Kapiti Kotuku crème fraîche & pistachio mousse with local citrus, seared king prawns & asparagus, mandarin oil, $19
Main "Cheese & mushroom toasted steak sanga"– warmed Kapiti Kotuku with Waimate mushrooms, grilled Angus sirloin & watercress mayonnaise, $34
Dessert Pohutukawa honey & Kapiti Awa Blue whip with dropped pavlova, new season's strawberries & 70% chocolate fondue, $14. Special full menu price, $60.

Pure Tastes *Paihia Beach Resort & Spa, 116 Marsden Rd, Paihia, ph: 09-402 0003, puretastes.co.nz*
Breakfast *7am-11am*
Dinner *7 days 6pm to late*
Entrée Kapiti Mt Hector & beetroot roulade, pickled Northland oyster mushrooms, Kapiti Mt Hector purée, macadamia & beet salad (dinner only), $21

AUCKLAND

Cibo *91 St Georges Bay Rd, Parnell, ph: 09-303 9660, cibo.co.nz*
Lunch *Mon-Fri from 12pm*
Dinner *Mon-Sat*
Entrée/main Beef carpaccio with Kapiti Mt Hector "cheesecake" sponge, balsamic powder, rocket leaves & almond crunch, $22
Dessert "Broken" lemon meringue pie with Italian meringue, Kapiti Mascarpone, cheese curd foam & lemon salad, $15

Mikano *1 Solent St, Mechanics Bay, ph: 09-309 9514, mikano.co.nz*
Brunch *Sun from 10am*
Lunch *Mon-Fri*
Dinner *Mon-Sun*
Entrée Twice-baked soufflé of Kapiti Tuteremoana Cheddar, spinach & walnuts with a pickled pear salad (lunch/dinner only), $21.50

Two Fifteen Bistro & Wine Bar *215 Dominion Rd, Mt Eden, ph: 09-630 6474, twofifteen.co.nz*
Lunch *Fri from 12pm*
Dinner *Tues-Sat from 5.30pm*
Entrée Kapiti Goat Feta & eggplant quenelles with walnut & rocket salad & apricot swipe, $17.50

SOUTH AUCKLAND

Bracu *49 Main Rd, Bombay, ph: 09-236 1031, simuolive.co.nz*
Lunch *Wed-Sun from 10.30am*
Dinner *Wed-Sun from 6pm*
Entrée Mint & basil marinated watermelon, crumbled Kapiti Kikorangi, chive pesto, wild herbs & flowers & sea salt (dinner only), $19.50

HAMILTON

Canvas Restaurant & Bar *1 Grantham St, ph: 07-839 2535, canvas.net.nz*
Lunch *Tues-Fri 11.30am-2pm*
Dinner *Tues-Sat from 6pm*
Entrée "Assiette of Kapiti cheese" – Kapiti Awa Blue foam, Kapiti Aged Gouda soufflé & grilled haloumi with peach summer salad, $18

COROMANDEL

Legends Restaurant & Bar *100 Augusta Drive, Pauanui, ph: 07-864 5110, lakesresort.com*
Lunch/dinner *7 days*
Dessert Kapiti Kikorangi beignets on beetroot carpaccio with Merlot jelly & honey foam, $14

WAIKATO/BAY OF PLENTY

Bistro1284 *1284 Eruera St, Rotorua, ph: 07-346 1284, bistro1284.co.nz*
Dinner *7 days from 6pm*
Entrée Kapiti Tuteremoana Cheddar sorbet with Parma ham, smoked vine-ripened tomatoes, basil oil & a balsamic reduction, $14.50

Mount Bistro Restaurant *6 Adams Ave, Mt Maunganui, ph: 07-575 3872, mountbistro.co.nz*
Dinner *Tues-Sun from 5.30pm*
Entrée Savoury Kapiti Kikorangi & walnut cheesecake with poached pear, spiced walnuts & red onion marmalade, $20

Plateau Restaurant & Bar *64 Tuwharetoa St, Taupo, ph: 07-377 2425, plateautaupo.co.nz*
Lunch/bar meals/dinner *7 days*
Entrée/dessert Kapiti Kikorangi tart with candy pecan nuts, witloof & citrus emulsion, $16.50

Roquette Restaurant & Bar *23 Quay St, Whakatane, ph: 07-307 0722, roquette-restaurant.co.nz*
Lunch/dinner *Mon-Sat from 10am*
Main Marinated lamb loin, caramelised onion & Kapiti Kahurangi rösti, with steamed greens & port wine jus (dinner only), $33.90

HAWKE'S BAY

Te Awa Winery Restaurant *2375 SH50, Hastings, ph: 06-879 7602, teawa.com*
Lunch *7 days from 12pm*
Cheese selection Soft herb-crumbed Kapiti Mt Hector with marinated fig terrine, home-made quince paste, wafers, pine nuts & olive oil, $17

NEW PLYMOUTH

Okurukuru Restaurant *738 Surf Highway 45, ph: 06-751 0787, okurukuru.co.nz*
Brunch/lunch/dinner *Tues-Sun 10am-7pm*
Pre-dessert dish Warm Kapiti Kikorangi & kiwifruit brûlée with a crisp Kapiti Pamaro & walnut tuile, finished with parmesan air (lunch/dinner only), $16.50

PALMERSTON NORTH

Nero Café & Restaurant *36 Amesbury St, ph: 06-354 0312, cafenero.co.nz*
Lunch *Mon-Fri*
Dinner *Mon-Sat*
Entrée Kapiti Bocconcini thyme & lemon tortellini with caramelised shallots, currants, pine nuts & a balsamic reduction topped with fresh Kapiti Grana Padano (dinner only), $14.50

The Gallery *416 Church St, ph: 06-357 3944, vanuffelen.co.nz*
Lunch *7 days from 9.30 am*
Dinner *Tues-Sat*
Main Kapiti Tuteremoana Cheddar twice-baked soufflé with flaked roasted salmon & herb salad, $26

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WELLINGTON

Hippopotamus Restaurant & Bar *Level 3, Museum Hotel, 90 Cable St, ph: 04-802 8935, hippopotamus.co.nz*
Lunch *Mon-Fri*
Breakfast/dinner *7 days*
Entrée Kapiti Kikorangi tortellini on creamed leek with micro salad & Parma ham shavings (lunch/dinner only), $20

Logan Brown *cnr Cuba & Vivian Sts, ph: 04-801 5114, loganbrown.co.nz*
Lunch *Mon-Fri*
Dinner *7 days*
Dessert Sugar pear & frangipane tart with Kapiti Kahurangi & pear gumdrop ice-cream, $19

Matterhorn *106 Cuba St, ph: 04-384 8918, matterhorn.co.nz*
Lunch *7 days from 10am*
Dinner *7 days from 5.30pm*
Dessert Kapiti Mt Hector with strawberries, black pepper & croustillants, $15

One80° Restaurant & Lounge Bar *Copthorne Hotel, 100 Oriental Parade, ph: 04-385 0279, millenniumhotels.co.nz*
Breakfast *7 days from 6.30am*
Dinner *7 days from 6pm*
Main Kapiti Kikorangi grilled beef tenderloin with red onion tarte Tatin, Kapiti Kikorangi parfait, pear paste & broccoli with walnut butter (dinner only), $36

The General Practitioner *Cnr Willis & Boulcott Sts, ph: 04-499 6001, thegp.co.nz*
Lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée/light main Venison carpaccio with Kapiti Sainte-Maure, beetroot gâteau & watercress pesto, $24

NELSON

The Honest Lawyer Country Pub & Hotel *1 Point Rd, Monaco, ph: 03-547 8850, honestlawyer.co.nz*
Breakfast/lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée Kapiti Kikorangi salad of manuka honey poached pear, crisp salad greens, baby watercress & Kapiti Kikorangi wafers with hazelnut vinaigrette (dinner only), $19.50

HOKITIKA

Stations Inn Restaurant & Bar *Blue Spur Rd, ph: 03-755 5499, stationsinnhokitika.co.nz*
Lunch *By appointment*
Dinner *7 days from 6pm*
Entrée Quince & Kapiti Kahurangi tartlet served with delicate poached pear, walnut & rocket salad with hazelnut oil, $15.50

CANTERBURY

Nor'Wester Café *95 Main North Rd, Amberley, ph: 03-314 9411, norwestercafe.co.nz*
Dinner *7 days from 6pm*
Entrée Kapiti Mt Herbert tart with beetroot granita & rocket & pine nut salad, $16.50

The Lakes Restaurant at Clearwater *Clearwater Ave, Harewood, Christchurch, ph: 03-360 1002, clearwaternz.com*
Lunch *Fri-Sun*
Dinner *7 Days*
Main (lunch) or **entrée** (dinner) Kapiti Mt Herbert & beetroot tart with watercress & vincotto, $18

TIMARU

Steak @ Customs House *2 Strathallan St, ph: 03-684 5528, customshouse.co.nz*
Dinner *7 days*
Entrée Kapiti Mt Hector pâté, roasted beetroot salad finished with walnut vinaigrette, & Melba toast accompanied by Kapiti Tuteremoana Cheddar filo cigar & plum sauce, $15

CENTRAL OTAGO

Lombardi Restaurant Hotel *St Moritz, 10-18 Brunswick St, Queenstown, ph: 03-442 4990, stmoritz.co.nz*
Breakfast/lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée "Awa Awa Awa"– Kapiti Awa Blue filled slow-poached pears, Awa Blue & port mousse, Awa Blue crème & Awa Blue walnut & blueberry salad (dinner only), $19

The Millhouse Millbrook, *Malaghans Rd, Arrowtown, ph: 03-441 7000, millbrook.co.nz*
Lunch *7 days from 12pm*
Dinner *7 days from 6pm*
Entrée "Fiordland wild hare" – horopito-rubbed loin confit hare terrine, Kapiti Kotuku soufflé with Kapiti Kotuku & ginger beer sherbet & roasted beetroot purée (dinner only), $23

Sargoods Restaurant *Edgewater Resort Sargood Drive, Wanaka, ph: 03-443 8311, edgewater.co.nz*
Breakfast/lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée Kapiti Chèvre de Bellay with rosemary wafers & smoked capsicum relish (lunch/dinner only), $16

Shaky Bridge Vineyard Café *Graveyard Gully Rd, Alexandra, ph: 03-448 8511, williamhill.co.nz*
Breakfast/lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée Kapiti Raclette & caramelised red onion tart with Cardrona Valley merino lamb, Panko-crumbed sweetbreads, quince & walnut vinaigrette (dinner only), $18

DUNEDIN

Plato *2 Birch St, ph: 03-477 4235, platocafe.co.nz*
Brunch *Sunday*
Dinner *7 nights*
Entrée/cheese course Cheese fondue of Kapiti Te Horo Swiss & a special reserve gruyère with Emerson's Weizenbock beer, served with a selection of pickled walnuts, dried cherries, cauliflower & broccoli florets, apple crisps, quince paste, Jersey Benne potatoes & homemade breads & crackers, $22.50

Two Chefs Bistro *121 Stuart St, ph: 03-477 7293*
Lunch/dinner *7 days*
Entrée Pithiviers of Kapiti Chèvre de Bellay with walnut & apple Pinot Noir paste, & roasted eggplant salad (dinner only), $17

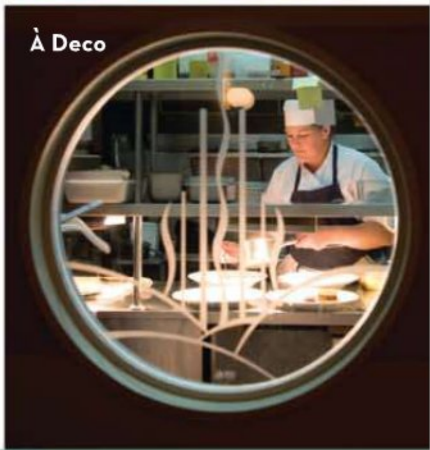
INVERCARGILL

Eat on Windsor *38 Windsor St, ph: 03-217 7722, eatonwindsor.com*
Lunch/dinner *7 days*
All-day dish Parmesan pine nut & Kapiti Kikorangi tart with quince & rocket, $18.50

Emberz at Ascot Restaurant *Ascot Park Hotel, cnr Tay St & Racecourse Rd, ph: 03-217 6195, ascotparkhotel.co.nz*
Breakfast/dinner *7 days*
Dessert Pâté of Kapiti Kikorangi, Madeira poached pear, fresh local walnuts & spiced biscuits (dinner only), $15.50

Paddington Arms *(formerly Flannagans Seafood Restaurant), 220 Bainfield Rd, ph: 03-215 8156, paddingtonarms.co.nz*
Lunch *7 days from 11am*
Dinner *7 nights*
Cheese course Warm gingerbread with Kapiti Kahurangi, poached pear & spiced figs in rosemary syrup, $11.50

Hippopotamus Restaurant & Bar


À Deco

To find out more about the Kapiti Chef Collection or the unique range of New Zealand original cheeses, visit kapiticollection.co.nz

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IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT WE ANNOUNCE THE winners OF THE

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

From an impressive line-up of artisan produce, the

CLEVEDON VALLEY BUFFALO COMPANY'S BUFFALO YOGHURT

was chosen as the Supreme Winner and we congratulate owners Helen and Richard Dorresteyn on their achievements. This fine yoghurt epitomises the courage and commitment to quality shown by all 12 winners in the following pages and we applaud them all.

THANKS TO all the readers who nominated their favourite artisans. We are delighted to have you join us in celebrating the wealth and diversity of fine produce available here.

We would also like to thank associate sponsor Caffe L'affare, a company which in so many ways exemplifies the principles we are celebrating here.

"The *Cuisine* Artisan Awards is a great fit for our business," marketing manager, Jessica Godfrey, says. "When our founder, Jeff Kennedy, started Caffe L'affare 20 years ago, he had to forge his way in unknown territory.

"Jeff is now known as the godfather of espresso in New Zealand. Starting a business you are passionate about and producing on a small scale is seldom easy. We hope these awards will give these great producers the boost in profile they deserve."

So do we. Most have started out not realising the work that lay ahead of them and they should be rewarded. Read on and enjoy our food heroes.

THE JUDGES

The judges were *Cuisine* deputy food editor Fiona Smith, who headed the panel; *Cuisine* editor, Eric Matthews; *Cuisine* editor of Food, News & Views and Restaurants, Toni Mason; *Cuisine* senior food writer and chef, Al Brown; founder of Delmaine Fine Foods and owner of Vin Alto, Enzo Bettio; co-founder of Sabato Jacqui Dixon; co-owner of Moore Wilson Julie Moore; Caffe L'affare marketing manager, Jessica Godfrey.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN DOWNIE
PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON CREAGHAN

Mikasa glasses from The Studio of Tableware; Epicurean black cutting boards from Cranfields; La Chamba bowls from French Country Collections. For full details see Credits Index.

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SUPREME WINNER

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

Clevedon Valley Buffalo Company

Buffalo Yoghurt

With its wonderful texture and creaminess, offset by a pleasing sour tang, this outstanding example of European-style yoghurt won the judges' full admiration. And the intrepidity of owners Helen and Richard Dorresteyn also impressed. "Buffalo are mad," declared one, and the sheer work involved is as weighty as the beasts themselves.

The distinctive qualities of buffalo milk, which contains about twice the solids of ordinary cow's milk, allow this velvety thick-set yoghurt to be made with no additives required – just the milk and culture.

The courageous couple imported their first herd of buffalo in 2007 from Australia, as they wanted to produce buffalo mozzarella after gaining guidance from cheesemakers in Italy who took them under their wing. But they didn't get all the answers and it hasn't been easy.

"I wouldn't recommend it," Helen says. "It's been a very tough few years."

Their pain is our gain.

A former art teacher, Helen founded the Clevedon Farmers' Market. She was having difficulty finding a regular cheesemaker, as they're often too busy, she says. So Richard, an industrial electrician, gallantly said, "I'll make you some cheese." But they wanted to do something different as they felt there were already tons of great cheesemakers out there.

Of making the mozzarella, which requires hand-stretching, Helen says, "With cheese that's aged, you look at it over time. We stretch for about an hour, so the window is very small. All sorts of variables can set it off. You have to have all your ducks in a row. Richard knows by looking at it. He's now in tune with it."

Though mozzarella was their initial focus, Helen and Richard had tried buffalo yoghurt overseas and thought it was "mind-bogglingly good" so started making it early on. But they didn't at first have enough milk to produce it along with the mozzarella.

The yoghurt has been a hit with chefs. "It goes all over the place and people are doing all sorts of weird and wonderful things with it," Helen says.

We recommend you do, too. You can use this yoghurt everywhere, in savoury and sweet concoctions. See below for ideas.

clevedonbuffalo.co.nz

MORE SERVING TIPS

- Combine buffalo yoghurt with lemon curd and serve with meringues, pavlova or as a filling for small tart cases topped with fresh berries.
- Flavour buffalo yoghurt to make a simple spread for pita crisps, crackers, flatbreads, toast or over hot baked potatoes. Try ready-made dukkah or freshly roasted spices, garlic, freshly chopped soft herbs such as parsley, mint, chives, dill or capers, lemon zest and finely chopped olives.
- Buffalo yoghurt combined with tahini and lemon juice makes a delicious sauce for kebabs, koftas and lamb burgers.
- For a simple dessert, drizzle buffalo yoghurt with liquid honey, sprinkle with toasted almonds and cinnamon, and serve with fresh fruit or crisp biscuits.

ALI NAZIK

(Smoked Eggplant Purée with Lamb & Yoghurt)

- 2 small-medium eggplants
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons tahini paste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, lightly crushed
- 300g lamb mince
- 250g Clevedon Valley Buffalo Yoghurt
- 40g butter, melted
- ¼ cup chopped flat-leafed parsley
- ½ teaspoon sumac

Place the eggplants directly over the flame of a gas burner or barbecue, or under a preheated grill, turning regularly, until completely blackened and soft. Place in a large bowl, cover with a lid or plastic wrap and leave to sweat for 10 minutes.

Peel off and discard as much of the blackened skin as you can. Cut the stalks off the eggplants, chop the flesh and place in a food processor with the lemon juice, garlic, tahini and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Process until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and spread over a serving dish.

Heat the remaining oil in a frying pan and fry the cumin for 1 minute then add the lamb and fry until browned. Season with salt and spoon on top of the eggplant purée. Top with spoonfuls of buffalo yoghurt, drizzle with butter then scatter the parsley and sumac over. Serve with warmed flatbreads. Serves 6-8.

NIELS SCHIPPER

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WITH ITS WONDERFUL TEXTURE AND CREAMINESS OFFSET BY A PLEASING TANG, THIS OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF EUROPEAN-STYLE YOGHURT WON THE JUDGES' FULL ADMIRATION

Helen and Richard Dorresteyn

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RUNNER UP

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

J. Friend and Co

New Zealand Artisan Wild Thyme Honey

The single-source, single-varietal, certified organic honeys of J. Friend and Co are a fantastic representation of New Zealand. Beautifully presented jars contain honeys from our native and wild flora, in the case of our runner-up here, the wild thyme that covers the rugged Central Otago landscape.

In a previous tourism-related role, director Jeremy Friend had met many organic beekeepers who were sending 300kg drums of their single-variety honeys straight overseas, leaving us locals the losers. He also noted that the flavour of the different honeys varied according to region, likening this to the significance of terroir on wine. The jars bear the vintage and name of the beekeeper (and you can find out more about them on the website).

So Jeremy and partner, Sharyn Woodnorth, started working with beekeepers throughout the country and began selling the range at his local farmers' market in Christchurch. Now it's available all over New Zealand and exported to Australia. He says he has a lot of fun, though it's "a lot more work than I realised".

But it's a fantastic industry, he says, where he has got a lot of help from dedicated beekeepers.

Thyme is one of the most interesting honeys, says Jeremy. The beekeeper who was harvesting it was sending it all overseas because he didn't think Kiwis would be that keen on it, but now it's one of the company's best sellers.

Thyme honey has been called the gorgonzola of honey, being bold, flavourful and more rounded than many others. And Jeremy encourages the notion of matching honey with cheeses, as is more customary in other countries. Among the range is a boxed collection of honey to match cheeses.

The judges noted the honey is extracted without heat and beautifully blended. One commented that thyme honey can be overwhelming, but in this case the floral nature is kept in check.

And how does Jeremy like his honey? "I'm old-fashioned. I can't beat a piece of grainy toast with thyme honey. And butter."

✱ nzartisanhoney.co.nz

Sharyn Woodnorth and Jeremy Friend

THYME HONEY HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE GORGONZOLA OF HONEY, BEING BOLD, FLAVOURFUL AND MORE ROUNDED THAN MANY

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RUNNER UP

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

Addmore Products

Elderflower Cordial

A stint as a nanny in the UK set Kate Addis, owner and founder of Addmore, on the path to producing elderflower cordial. The mother of her charges had an ancient recipe for it in an old recipe book of her grandmother's and they decided to try it. It was delicious and she began making it regularly for the family.

On her return home to south Canterbury, she detected the scent of elderflowers in the air. "I realised they could grow here because I could smell them – they smell like fresh clothes on the line," she says.

She hadn't known before that elders grew wild in Canterbury, just not around where she lived. Her aunt and uncle, a little further north, had them on their property and she took her first samples from there. They used to infuse the foliage into tea to use as a remedy for their horses' mud fever.

Kate was herself infused with the English passion for elderflower cordial. "It was huge there. And it's such a lovely drink. If all those people in the UK loved it, why wouldn't we like it here?"

Why indeed? The judges described it as a cordial for grown-ups and in grown-up fashion it greatly enhances cocktails. One judge suggested it could also be used to brush over a cake once baked. It is very refreshing, with good length and mouthfeel. Says Kate, "It's summer in a bottle."

✱ **addmore.co.nz**

"IT'S SUMMER IN A BOTTLE"

Kate Addis

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Proper Foods

Proper Crisps

Stuart Franklin (right), wife Kathryn and Larry Williamson

You could say the writing was on the wall for Stuart Franklin. The head fryer of Proper Crisps, who hails from north-east England, became the crisp monitor at school when he was seven years old, hawking crisps around the other kids just before playtime.

"Yes, the die was cast," says Stuart. At first they were 7p a bag and he knew his 7 times table backwards, but initially he ran into a bit of trouble when they went up to 8p.

Both Stuart and his wife, Kathryn – the tater technician – worked in food before coming out to settle in New Zealand, she as a food technologist and he in sales and marketing of food. They hadn't been here long before they started asking themselves why, when New Zealand grows some of the best potatoes in the world, could they not buy really great crisps.

They embarked on a global research trip, bought an old-fashioned crisp kettle in the US and set up their equipment in Upper Moutere with the help of Kathryn's dad, a retired Rolls-Royce aero engineer. After some experimentation, they hit on a crisp they were happy with.

They use potatoes from Canterbury (the variety varying according to the season and named on the bag), sunflower oil and sea salt from Lake Grassmere in Marlborough. Simple as that. A hands-on business, while the potatoes are frying, they're stirred with a stainless steel rake – a duty shared between Stuart and Larry, the fixer.

The judges found the crisps delicious and not overly salty, and were impressed with the simplicity and real nature of the ingredients.

And Stuart's favourite accompaniment for the only handmade crisps in Australasia? "One of Nelson's craft beers, of course."

propercrisps.co.nz

"THE JUDGES FOUND THEM DELICIOUS AND NOT OVERLY SALTY, AND WERE IMPRESSED WITH THE SIMPLICITY AND REAL NATURE OF THE INGREDIENTS"

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Kohu Road

Golden Syrup Ice-Cream

Kohu Road ice-cream has wowed us since it was launched in 2007, with the only squabbles being which flavour was the best.

But the latest in the range, Golden Syrup, caught the judges' imagination, with one declaring it could take over from hokey pokey as a Kiwi icon.

Made with Chelsea golden syrup, it certainly celebrates our heritage.

Owner and creator Greg Hall, who beforehand worked in IT, among other things, has put a lot of thought into his business. At first, the description of his philosophy as the art of Japanese cuisine meets Italian and French sensibility and style sounds an uneasy marriage. But Greg, who lived in Japan for 10 years with his Japanese chef wife, Yayoi, explains.

"Japanese cuisine was the original precursor to the modern idea of paring things back. It's more about celebrating the ingredients, like if you have a great piece of fish, eat it raw."

Deliriously good, his ice-creams are made with the best ingredients and free from any artificial additives. "For me, it's about what doesn't go in," says Greg.

The name Kohu Road comes from where he lives in Auckland's Titirangi and the kauri on his logo also reflects the trees he's surrounded by there. And while he may have found establishing his ice-cream a hard road at times, it has made big inroads into the hearts of his customers. It can only be rewarding to be thanked by a mother, for example, because her child can eat ice-cream again due to the absence of preservatives in his.

The judges found the Golden Syrup ice-cream to be mid-palate creamy with a wonderful caramelly flavour and, while it needs no adornment, many agreed it would go down a treat with apple pie. Treat yourself.

✱ **kohuroad.co.nz**

Greg Hall

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QUITE SIMPLY, IT'S THE BEST PEANUT BUTTER WE'VE TRIED, WITH A FRESH ROASTED FLAVOUR AND FANTASTICALLY BLENDED TEXTURE

Picot Productions

Pic's Really Good Peanut Butter

Pic Picot

Growing up with a dad who was one of the founders of Foodtown, peanut butter producer Pic Picot thought there was nothing more boring than groceries. "But I've come full circle," he says.

And how did that happen? He's always loved peanut butter and one day, breakfasting with an American mate, he studied a jar that said "health style with reduced sugar". Later he noted local peanut butters started having added sugar. "There's no need for sugar in there," he thought and resolved to start making his own.

True to his keep-it-simple notion, his peanut butter contains nothing but peanuts and salt (he also makes an unsalted version, if you must). And as he uses high-oil-content peanuts (from Australia since we don't grow them here), he doesn't need to add oil either.

This comes "in an amazingly returnable jar", as the label reads. If you return the glass jar to Pic at the Nelson Market, 50c goes to the Brooke Wildlife Sanctuary. And why are there pictures of lawnmowers on the jar? We asked Pic so you don't have to: "I just like lawnmowers. I'm an outdoorsy, low-tech kind of a guy." Which probably explains the stainless steel concrete mixer with a burner under it he had built to dry-roast the nuts when he first started.

He and partner, Sandy Francis, who is responsible for marketing and moral support, have come a long way since then, but he still sells at the market, urging passersby to try a sample.

"I love it," says Pic. "I love making them try it at the market. And they're incredibly grateful. I know I'm doing them a favour."

He's done us all a favour. Quite simply, it's the best peanut butter we've tried, with a fresh roasted flavour and fantastically blended texture.

reallygood.co.nz

Find more magazines at www.magazinesdownload.com

Karikaas Natural Dairy Products

Unsalted Cultured Butter

Here at *Cuisine*, we've been known to get het up about the quality of butter in this country, so it's a delight when great butter comes to our attention. Sweet yet slightly sour with a nice cultured flavour, this traditionally made example was loved by the judges.

Unlike the usual "cream butter", made with cream, salt (mostly) and churned until you're left with butter and whey, this butter is made with whole milk to which a culture is added. It is left for 24 hours, then churned, separating into butter and buttermilk (which they also sell – it's terrific in baking).

Because there is no salt added, it has a shorter shelf life. Around two weeks, says Karikaas general manager, Diana Hawkins, but you can freeze it.

The company also makes Dutch-style cheeses and everything is done in the traditional manner. Nothing they produce is determined by time, like in a standard factory situation; the process is determined by hands-on attention. "We touch it, feel it, smell it," says Diana. Milk, of course, varies through the year and they have to pay attention to what it and the process are telling them.

A food technologist, Diana is constantly amazed by the process of fermentation. "I'm fascinated that you have one starting product and can make so many different things. You're manipulating the conditions. With milk you can make yoghurt, cheese, butter – so many things. You just change the fermentation. I love it."

It's the same with bread, she points out, citing Rachel Scott's breads (another of our winners), which are poles apart from standard commercial types. "If you're making a good product, you have to start with the best ingredients and treat them with care and respect. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

Diana points out that some Kiwis find unsalted butter an acquired taste. "It takes a while to adjust." Well, take the plunge, we say.

✱ karikaas.co.nz

Diana Hawkins

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The Damson Collection

Damson Paste

Damsons, a small variety of plum, were once very popular. However, they are very tart so need to be cooked and made into jams, jellies or paste, and seem to have all but disappeared. Catherine Rusby, one of three partners in the business, has a theory. "People don't cook so much any more, so the damsons were left on the trees. They just fell to the ground and out of favour."

She finds that people from older generations who remember them well say there's nothing like damsons for a plum flavour. And indeed one of the judges noted that, saying he found the paste had a flavour like Black Doris.

The ingredients in the paste are simple: damsons, lemon juice, sugar and olive oil. As the fruit has plenty of pectin, nothing needs to be added.

The damsons are cooked the same day they are picked, in an old-fashioned method, in batches of no more than 2kg at a time, for hours until the right set is achieved. We cook by "feel", they say.

Business partner Margie Chambers does the cooking and her husband, Tom, is the orchardist. Catherine deals with sales and marketing.

The trio see the Damson Collection as leading a revival of the neglected plum. And it seems to be working. "The paste is so wonderful, it's easy to sell," says Catherine.

This luscious paste is solid enough to use on a cheeseboard and goes particularly well with blue cheese and aged cheddar, the strong flavours standing up to each other well.

It can be simply had on toast, stirred through a jus to go with game meats or into the pan drippings of a roast of lamb. Or try it as a condiment with ham or turkey.

thedamsoncollection.co.nz

Margie and Tom Chambers (left) and Catherine Rusby

Mariano Vivas-Sabido

Mariano's Spanish Goods

Fresh Chorizo

It's not surprising Barcelona-born Mariano Vivas-Sabido got into the business of making chorizo. As a child he would watch and join in the ritual of making them. In fact the whole village in León where his father's family lived did – from the killing and bleeding of the pigs to the mixing and curing of the spicy Spanish sausages.

He says he has never tasted chorizos as good as those. And after moving to Christchurch three years ago he was in for more disappointment as he couldn't find good-quality authentic Spanish sausages at all. He missed them dreadfully, so there was only one thing to do about it.

He uses his family's traditional recipe, passed down through the generations, with the best ingredients: the Murellen free-range pork, garlic, salt and natural casings are all local, but Spanish paprika is essential. He has noted since he has been here that Kiwis have a liking for smoky flavours – most of the chorizos he could find here were actually smoked and we like smoked fish, he says, so he has adjusted the quantity of smoked paprika he uses.

His chorizo is fresh so naturally needs to be cooked (other types are cured and smoked).

Earthy and chunky – the meat is only passed through the mincer once so you can see the quality – the chorizo had the judges raving. The pork flavour comes through beautifully, balanced with the smokiness, they found. It would lift a lot of dishes, they said, by cooking it in a pan, then other ingredients in the fat.

Mariano says it fancies up a pizza or a pasta dish, and goes well with rice. "Us Spanish try to keep things simple, but my favourite way of having it is fried in a pan with eggs."

spanishgoods.co.nz

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Mandy Kain (left) and Mandy Steel

Horseradish New Zealand

Mandys Horseradish

After living on a farm, Mandy Kain couldn't stand living in town so she wanted to justify a move to a 10-acre block. She hit on the idea of growing horseradish and fortune was on her side. "I didn't do any research," she says. "It just turned out that the soil was perfect." And Canterbury's frosty conditions were also just right.

She started to make horseradish cream from a family recipe and some people will note a kinship with the classic condensed milk mayo. It was a cottage industry for some time, but five years ago Mandy decided she needed help. And then there were two. A friend introduced her to Mandy Steel and the renamed Mandys Horseradish was born.

They do the entire process themselves by hand, working in all conditions, in gumboots, and goggles when processing the harvest – from the paddock to screwing the lids on the jars.

They also supply fresh horseradish to the Americans in Antarctica, at some stages each plane leaving Christchurch carrying 10kg-20kg. "They just love it grated on their steaks and hamburgers."

With its combination of heat and sweetness, this horseradish cream has plenty of power and is more than just the traditional accompaniment to roast beef, fine as that is. Try, for example, adding it to cauliflower purée and serving it with, say, smoked eel. Mix it with plain unsweetened yoghurt and serve with salmon. Some of us like it mixed in our bloody Marys. Also, see Al Brown's pea and horseradish crush on page 67.

✱ **horseradish.co.nz**

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Ringawera Waiheke Island

Spiced Lavash

Patrick Griffiths was a winner last year in our inaugural Artisan Awards with his Sesame Seed Lavash. And he's done it again this year, this time with his spiced version, which contains fennel and caraway seeds, and dill tips, along with New Zealand white and wholemeal flours, Waiheke olive oil and Marlborough sea salt.

Ringawera means "hot hands", the name Maori gave to those who worked in the kitchen. And Patrick says his hands definitely get hot and need to be quick. "It's a difficult product to work with. You have to move fast and you have to be on top of it all the time."

The crisp flatbread is rolled very thinly and can be temperamental. "Variation in moisture content of the flour or humidity can make it difficult. And as it's unleavened, trying to get it to behave as I want is tricky," he says.

He first started making lavash when he was a trainee chef. "Nobody else wanted to do it so they handed it to the newbie," he says. "It's a great thing to train on – a real headbanger."

When he moved on, he developed his own recipe as he didn't want to use bought crackers. And this spiced version was the original.

Patrick likes to serve it on a platter with cheese and accompaniments. He finds that when the cheese is finished, you keep going back to the lavash as is. The judges also thought it was great on its own, with cheese and amazing with smoked salmon. Patrick suggests smoked fish, too, including in dip form.

ringawera.com

"THE JUDGES ALSO THOUGHT IT WAS GREAT ON ITS OWN, WITH CHEESE AND AMAZING WITH SMOKED SALMON"

YOU TOO CAN WIN

Win a selection of these products plus coffee from Caffe L'affare and wines from Hawke's Bay winery Trinity Hill. For details, see the insert in this issue (subscribers are automatically entered).

ARTISANS READER DINNER

A special four-course menu using the winning artisan products will be held at Piko Piko restaurant, Auckland University of Technology, on Thursday 8 April at 6.30pm. Tickets are $65 per head and include the dinner and matching wines from leading New Zealand artisan winery Trinity Hill. Tickets limited to 60 people. To book ph: 09-921 9932.

WHERE TO BUY

AUCKLAND
Sabato ph: 09-630 8751, sabato.co.nz
Farro Fresh ph: 09-570 7071, farrofresh.co.nz
Nosh (head office), ph: 09-531 5366, noshfoodmarket.com

WELLINGTON
Moore Wilson (Tory St), ph: 04-384 9906, moorewilson.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH
Mercato, ph: 03-377 6994, mercato.co.nz

QUEENSTOWN
Mediterranean Market, ph: 03-442 4161, mediterranean.co.nz

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Rachel Scott Bread

Ciabatta

"I always thought I'd either paint or be an architect," says Rachel Scott. Which probably says a lot about her philosophy on baking. But when she arrived in London in 1989, coinciding with the start of the modern British food movement, she fell into working as a chef, mainly in the pastry section where she started to hone her skills as a baker.

On her return to New Zealand in 1995, she set up Rachel Scott Bread and started to produce hand-crafted breads with an elegant simplicity. Rachel's approach has been to take classical breads and put her own stamp on them.

They have certainly become world famous in New Zealand and the ciabatta is a fantastic example of the classic Italian slipper bread – light, fresh, airy and just beautiful, the judges found.

"There are no shortcuts to achieving loaves with texture and depth of flavour," she says. She starts with pure ingredients: flour made from Canterbury-grown wheat, Spanish olive oil and Dominion Pacific sea salt from Marlborough in the case of the ciabatta.

"I have an intuitive approach to baking," says Rachel, "and believe it is through the use of my hands that I gauge the subtle responses required for the dough."

She still bakes alone in her pursuit of excellence, resisting encouragement from friends to expand her operation. "I want to know what goes on with every single loaf," she says.

For her, baking is an art – and anyone who tries her bread could only agree there's artistry behind it. She doesn't necessarily want to draw a parallel between architecture and baking, but both, she says, cater to the basic needs of shelter and food, so perhaps she's not that far from her original plans. And she clearly has no regrets.

"I still find baking magical, even though we understand the chemical process. I still find it amazing." Amazing and magic like her breads.

✱ **Ph: 03-314 8020**

"THE CIABATTA IS A FANTASTIC EXAMPLE OF THE CLASSIC ITALIAN SLIPPER BREAD – LIGHT, FRESH, AIRY AND JUST BEAUTIFUL"

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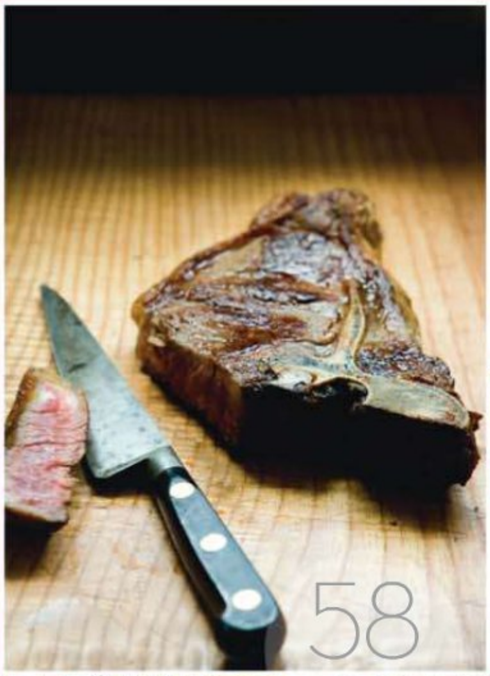
food



58 AL BROWN UPS THE STEAKS
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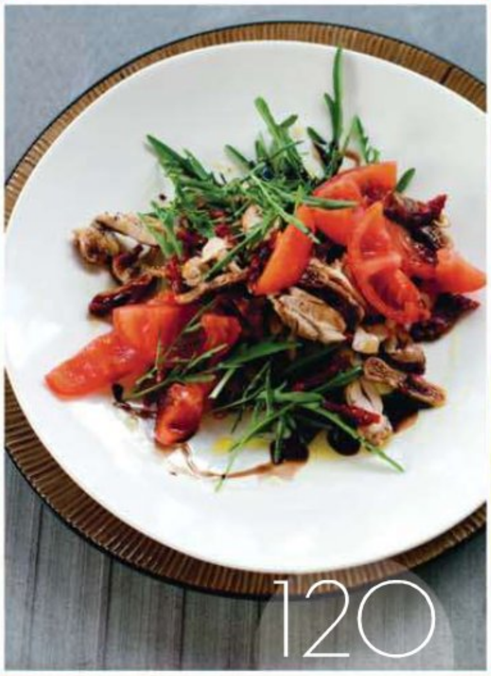

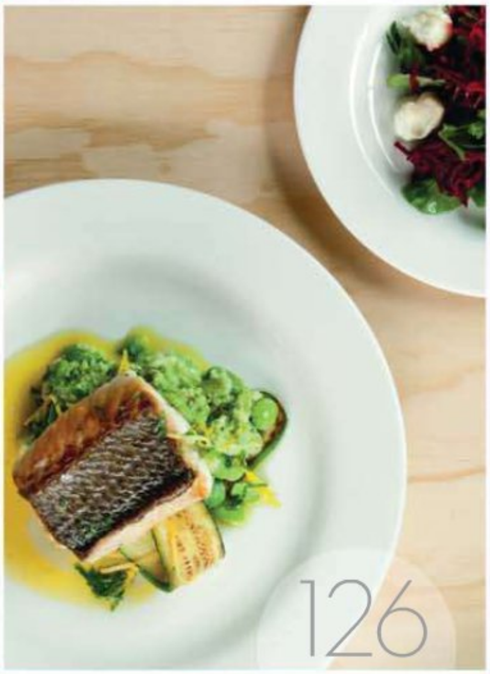

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I'm willing to bet the most repeated line in restaurants across the land is, "I'll have the steak, thanks!" We are a nation that salivates over a well-aged piece of steak, which is hardly surprising, given our reputation for producing outstanding naturally raised beef (and lamb). Steak dishes served in restaurants are nearly always the simplest on the menu. Often served unadorned or with just a lick of mustard, a perfectly cooked, correctly seasoned steak needs little else. However, as simple as the preparation may sound, a steak's arrival invariably invites serious scrutiny – taking in size, thickness and caramelisation. Next, and regarded by most as the moment of truth, also known as the reveal, is the first cut. The fork stabs and secures the edge of the steak as the knife slices through the corner – the first indicator of what you're about to experience on the carnivore ecstasy scale. More than two or three evenly weighted slices to get through your steak and the alarm bells begin to sound. A slight turn of the wrist revealing a dry tinge of pink surrounded by grey and one is in for a mediocre eating experience.

Many things affect steak quality. The animal leaving the farm has to be in top condition – the saying "you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" comes to mind. And the processing of the animal should be as quick and as stress-free as possible. The carcass should be chilled slowly, cold boned and needs ageing before hitting the grill. Beef correctly stored at 1°C can last for months and should be aged for at least two weeks but preferably six to eight weeks at this temperature. The ageing process is accelerated in a warmer environment such as a domestic fridge. And there is the human factor – the terms rare, medium rare and well done are open to interpretation.

Great restaurants source the best possible cuts. They may be a little more expensive but when you take the first bite, you'll realise it's great value compared with that chewy overcooked steak you ate at the café down the road for $8 less. Don't buy steak that is on sale. There's a good reason why it's on special. Seek out the Meat New Zealand quality mark and passionate butchers that sell branded beef. And keep it simple. A seasoned and nicely seared steak cooked to your liking with that smudge of good-quality mustard on the side will always be a winner. On the other hand, the recipes that follow are equally delicious.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY AL BROWN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT / STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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RAISING THE STEAKS

SUCCULENT STEAK CAN BE A SIMPLE MATTER, SAYS **AL BROWN**, AS LONG AS YOU STICK TO A FEW RULES

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GRILLED SIRLOIN WITH MUSTARD GREENS, WALNUTS, BLUE CHEESE & SHIRAZ SYRUP
recipe page 66

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT COOKING STEAKS IS THAT YOU CAN THROW SOME PRETTY BIG FLAVOURS AT THEM AND THEY ARE UP TO IT

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WHOLE ROASTED PRIME RIB WITH MUSHROOM & TRUFFLE MACARONI & PEA & HORSERADISH CRUSH

recipe page 67

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MARINATED SKIRT STEAK WITH ROASTED EGGPLANT SAMBAL & CAULIFLOWER BHAJI
recipe page 68

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR THIS UNDERRATED AND LITTLE-USED STEAK

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T-BONE STEAKS WITH ROASTED FENNEL, CARAMELISED SHALLOTS & RADICCHIO
recipe page 69

THE T-BONE IS THE STEAK THAT HAS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS. CONTAINING DIFFERENT CUTS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BONE, IT HAS THE WONDERFUL FLAVOUR OF THE SIRLOIN AND THE SMALLER TREAT OF THE TENDER FILLET ALONGSIDE

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FILLET STEAK WITH SAUTÉED OYSTER MUSHROOMS, MULLED WINE JELLY & ROASTED GARLIC CUSTARD
recipe page 70

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BEEFEATER'S GUIDE

- Upon opening vacuum packs of portioned meat, you will sometimes notice a slight sour or acidy smell. This is known as "confinement odour" and quickly disappears once the meat is removed from the pack. It is not an indication of product deterioration.
- Lean New Zealand grass-fed beef is high in protein, B vitamins, zinc, iron and vitamin D, while relatively low in fat and cholesterol.
- It also contains twice as much iron as chicken breast and pork, six times as much iron as spinach and eight times as much iron as white fish.
- Bring your steaks out of the fridge at least an hour before cooking to bring them up to room temperature.
- Trim off any evident silver skin or connective tissue.
- Pat steaks dry before cooking.
- Always season steaks just before cooking as the salt will draw out the natural juices.
- Preheat the grill or pan to very hot to get a great sear on the steak.
- It is a total myth that you can "seal" in moisture by searing meat over high heat. Searing, or browning, the meat creates extra flavour and gives it an appetising colour, too.
- To cook to your liking, rare is soft to touch, medium is firm and slightly springy to touch, and well done is firm to touch.
- Thick steaks can be seared on the stovetop then finished in the oven at 180°C-190°C. Turn the steak once halfway through cooking (this is my preferred option).
- Always rest steaks in a warm place for at least 5 minutes before serving.

GRILLED SIRLOIN WITH MUSTARD GREENS, WALNUTS, BLUE CHEESE & SHIRAZ SYRUP

What I love about cooking steaks is that you can throw some pretty big flavours at them and they are up to it. This dish is a case in point. It is what I would describe as a warm salad, but has some big-flavoured components riding alongside with, of course, the steak being the hero that ties it all together. Dishes like this are a meal in themselves and have no real need for a carbohydrate to be involved; just a loaf of crisp fresh bread will do the trick.

Make sure you source good fresh walnuts. Look for Uncle Joe's from Marlborough, which also produces wonderful walnut and hazelnut oils.

Caramelised Onions

- ½ cup canola oil
- 1kg onions, thinly sliced with the grain
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves
- pinch of dried chilli flakes
- ¼ cup malt vinegar or balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup water
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Mix all the ingredients, except the salt and pepper, in a large heavy-based saucepan or similar and place on low heat.

Stirring occasionally, cook over very gentle heat for 1-1½ hours until the onions are a deep golden brown with a slight jam-like consistency. Add a little more water during cooking to prevent the onions sticking if needed.

Remove from the heat, cool and refrigerate until required.

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Shiraz Syrup

- 1 cup Shiraz
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 whole star anise
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 pieces orange peel

Place all the ingredients in a saucepan and put over medium heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves and boil rapidly for about 5 minutes to reduce to a runny syrup consistency. Remember to take into consideration that the syrup will be a lot thicker once cooled.

For the salad

- 1 bag mustard greens or mesclun
- 1 bunch inner yellow celery leaves
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup fresh parsley leaves

Gently tear any of the large leaves of the greens. Place in a bowl with the celery leaves, basil and parsley. Lightly toss together. Cover with a damp towel and refrigerate until required.

To cook and serve

- 6 x 180g sirloin steaks, trimmed of silver skin
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- canola oil for grilling
- ½ cup roasted walnut halves
- 150g firm crumbly blue cheese
- walnut oil for serving

Heat the grill plate to high heat. Season the steaks liberally with sea salt and black pepper. Brush with a little oil and cook to your liking.

While the steaks are cooking, reheat the caramelised onions in a saucepan over low heat or in the microwave.

Once the steaks are cooked and rested, either on a platter or individual plates, make a bed of caramelised onion. Slice the sirloins into 1cm strips, exposing the pink inner of the steak. Top with the salad greens and walnuts, and crumble some blue cheese over.

To finish, drizzle walnut oil over, followed by the Shiraz syrup. A quick grind of fresh black pepper and you're good to go. Serves 6.

WHOLE ROASTED PRIME RIB WITH MUSHROOM & TRUFFLE MACARONI & PEA & HORSERADISH CRUSH

Americans are nuts about steak houses and I have to say if I'm spending any length of time "Stateside", I invariably find myself, at least once, lounging on a leather banquette surrounded by dark wood, polished brass, and waiters in waistcoats and long white aprons. The menus are all pretty standard from one to the next. However, the great ones take their beef seriously – it is all about age, flavour, texture and, of course, size. Never covered with a lot of jus or gravy, the steaks are mostly served naked with mustards, condiments and side dishes making up the meal.

This recipe is typical steak house fare and replicates what I enjoyed when I was last in Chicago. You are forewarned – these are huge (and impressive) steaks on the plate, each with a large rib bone.

Mushroom & Truffle Macaroni

- 300g dried macaroni
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 150g shallots, finely sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 200g button mushrooms, sliced
- 100g oyster mushrooms, stems discarded and halved
- 100g shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded and sliced
- 40g butter
- 40g flour
- 6 cups milk
- 20g parmesan, finely grated
- 2 teaspoons truffle oil
- ½ cup finely chopped parsley
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup coarse breadcrumbs
- 30g butter, melted

Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the macaroni and cook until just tender (5-7 minutes). Remove from the heat, drain in a colander then spread out on a tray to cool.

Place a large sauté pan on medium to low heat. Add the canola oil then the shallots, garlic and thyme. Sauté gently for 20 minutes until soft and translucent. Increase the heat slightly then add all the mushrooms. Mix in and cook for 10 minutes until soft. Remove from the heat and reserve.

Place another saucepan on medium heat. Add the butter and, once melted, add the flour, whisking to form a roux. Continue to whisk and slowly add the milk, a cupful at a time. Once all incorporated, bring up to the boil, stirring, then remove from the heat. Cool a little then add the parmesan and whisk in the truffle oil.

Place the cooked macaroni and the sautéed mushrooms in a large bowl. Pour the white sauce over, add the parsley and mix. Season with sea salt and a liberal amount of pepper then pour into a suitable ovenproof dish.

Put the breadcrumbs in a small bowl and pour in the melted butter. Mix the butter into the breadcrumbs then sprinkle evenly over the macaroni. Refrigerate until required.

Pea & Horseradish Crush

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 100g shallots, coarsely chopped
- 500g peas
- 2 tablespoons creamed horseradish (I use Mandys)
- 4 tablespoons cream
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place a small sauté pan on medium heat. Once hot, add the oil followed by the shallots. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly golden. Remove and reserve. >

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GREAT STEAK HOUSES TAKE THEIR BEEF SERIOUSLY – IT IS ALL ABOUT AGE, FLAVOUR, TEXTURE AND, OF COURSE, SIZE

Place a medium saucepan half filled with salted water on high heat and bring to the boil. Add the peas and cook for 5 minutes or so until tender. Remove, drain and place in a bowl. Add the shallots along with the horseradish and cream.

With a wand blender or similar, process with the pulse button until you have a coarse mash. Season with sea salt and black pepper.

Serve immediately or cool and refrigerate until required.

To cook and serve

- I standard rib roast (6 ribs; see note)
- ⅓ cup Dijon mustard
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 carrots, halved
- 3 sticks celery, halved
- 3 medium onions, halved
- extra horseradish (for on the side)

Preheat the oven to 160°C-170°C.

Brush the rib roast liberally with Dijon mustard and season with sea salt and fresh black pepper.

Place the carrots, celery and onions in the middle of a large roasting dish. Sit the seasoned roast on top and place in the oven. To cook medium, allow 25-30 minutes per 500g of weight. The internal temperature should reach 65°C.

An hour before the roast is due to come out of the oven, remove the macaroni from the fridge and allow to come up to room temperature.

Once the roast is finished cooking and is resting (allow 30 minutes), place the macaroni in the oven to heat through until golden on top.

Reheat the pea and horseradish crush in a double boiler or microwave.

To serve, slice off each rib steak and place on preheated plates. Scoop out a large spoonful of macaroni and place alongside; repeat with the pea and horseradish crush. Serve immediately with some extra horseradish on the side. Serves 6.

Note: Ask your butcher to order and prepare one for you. Take note of the weight to help guide you in the cooking process.

MARINATED SKIRT STEAK WITH ROASTED EGGPLANT SAMBAL & CAULIFLOWER BHAJI

I buy skirt steak a lot these days as the price of premium cuts continues to climb. I have had a soft spot for this underrated and little-used steak since I happened upon it while working in a small bistro in Montreal many years ago. As skirt steak is a little tougher than the more popular cuts, we scored it with a sharp knife in a criss-cross pattern on both sides then marinated it for a couple of days or so. This makes the steak a bit more tender, though it still has a good bite to it, which I like, and what is maybe lost in tenderness is made up for in flavour. I played around with a few spices and yoghurt, and came up with an Indian-style take on this out-of-favour but wonderful steak. Start this recipe at least a day in advance, but make the tomato and coriander salad just before serving.

Marinated Skirt Steak

- 1.5kg skirt steak, trimmed of silver skin
- 1½ cups plain unsweetened yoghurt
- 1-2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh chilli
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground fenugreek seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground cumin seeds
- ½ tablespoon freshly ground coriander seeds
- 1½ tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

With the knobbly side of a meat tenderiser, lightly bash both sides of the steaks then score on both sides with a sharp knife in a criss-cross pattern. Cut each steak into 6 evenly sized portions.

For the marinade, place the remaining ingredients in a bowl and whisk to combine. Pour the marinade over the steaks and gently work in with clean hands. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 24 hours. Two days even better.

Cauliflower Bhaji

- 500g cauliflower florets
- canola oil for frying
- 250g diced onion
- 200g chickpea flour
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground fenugreek seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground coriander seeds
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground cumin seeds
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup cold water
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh chilli
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh coriander

Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil. Add the cauliflower florets and boil for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, strain and cool. Once cold, coarsely chop into smallish pieces and set aside.

Heat a frying pan and add a little canola oil along with the onion. Fry over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 6-8 minutes until just softened. Remove, cool and reserve.

Place the chickpea flour in a bowl with all the dried spices, and salt and pepper. Mix with a whisk to combine. Add the cup of cold water along with the tomato paste, chilli and lemon juice. Mix until combined then add the cauliflower, onion and fresh coriander. Mix thoroughly then refrigerate until required.

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Roasted Eggplant Sambal

- 1kg eggplant
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin seeds
- 2 fresh chillies, finely chopped
- ⅓ cup finely chopped red onion
- 1 cup plain unsweetened yoghurt
- 4 tablespoons lime juice
- ⅓ cup coarsely chopped coriander leaves
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Cut the eggplant in half lengthwise. Place in a roasting dish skin side down. Brush the flesh with the oil then sprinkle the turmeric and cumin over. Place in the oven for 30 minutes until the eggplant is golden brown and soft. Remove from the oven and let cool completely.

Once cold, remove the soft flesh from the skin with a spoon. Coarsely chop and place in a bowl with the chillies, onion, yoghurt, lime juice and coriander leaves. Stir to combine, taste and season with sea salt and black pepper. Refrigerate until required.

Fresh Tomato & Coriander Salad

- 300g tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- ½ small red onion, finely sliced with the grain
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ½ bunch fresh coriander leaves, coarsely chopped
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place the tomatoes along with the onion, lime juice and coriander in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper and gently stir together.

To cook and serve

- 1 cup canola oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Prepare the chargrill in the usual manner with a great base of white and red hot embers. Or heat a grill pan or frying pan.

For the bhaji, heat a large frying pan to medium then add the oil. Once hot, add tablespoonfuls of the bhaji mix and cook for 2 minutes either side until golden. Remove and keep warm on absorbent paper while you continue with the remaining mix.

Once the grill is ready, remove the steak from the fridge and scrape off any excess marinade. Season liberally with salt and pepper, and oil lightly before placing on the grill. Cook for 3-4 minutes on each side to about medium doneness.

To serve, place a steak on each plate, add a few bhaji and a dollop of the eggplant sambal. Finish with a large spoonful of the tomato coriander salad on the side or serve it all up on a few suitable platters. Serves 6.

T-BONE STEAKS WITH ROASTED FENNEL, CARAMELISED SHALLOTS & RADICCHIO

One of my first restaurant memories is of a T-bone steak being placed in front of my father at an Auckland restaurant called The Hungry Horse. I had never seen a piece of meat that size on a plate and to this day it evokes images of something Fred and Barney would eat on *The Flintstones*.

The T-bone has the best of both worlds, with different cuts on either side of the bone – the wonderfully flavourful sirloin and the smaller treat of the tender fillet alongside. For a large tasty steak, the side dish works a treat. It has great natural sweetness from the roasted vegetables and terrific bitterness from the lightly cooked radicchio. I usually serve it with some precooked new potatoes sliced then sautéed in a little garlic butter.

Caramelised Shallots

- 350g shallots, peeled
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup chicken stock
- 6 stems fresh thyme
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Place the shallots, oil, chicken stock and thyme in a small ovenproof dish. Season liberally with salt and pepper. Cover with tinfoil and place in the oven for 45 minutes until soft and slightly golden. Remove and set aside to cool.

Roasted Fennel

- 1kg fresh bulbs fennel
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 180°C. With a sharp knife remove the tough green stalks from the top of each fennel bulb. Discard. Cut the bulbs in half then slice into large wedges. From a medium-sized fennel bulb you should get about 8 wedges. Place the fennel wedges in a bowl then pour the oil over. Toss to combine and season with salt and pepper.

Heat an oven tray in the oven for 5 minutes then place the oiled fennel on the tray. Roast for 25 minutes then with tongs carefully turn the fennel wedges and continue cooking for another 10-15 minutes. Remove once golden and soft. Cool then reserve.

To cook and serve

- 6 x T-bone steaks
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- canola oil for frying
- 1 radicchio, ripped into pieces
- ⅓ cup whole flat-leafed parsley leaves
- 2 tablespoons best-quality balsamic vinegar
- extra virgin olive oil for serving

Heat the griddle flat-top or a skillet over high heat. Season the T-bones well with sea salt and black pepper, and cook to the desired doneness then rest for at least 5 minutes.

While the steaks are resting, heat a large sauté pan. Add a little oil and toss in the roasted shallots and fennel. Once hot through, add the radicchio. Stir through along with the parsley. Add the balsamic vinegar, season with salt and pepper, and toss together.

Serve the steaks on warm plates with a small pile of the fennel, shallots and radicchio on the side. To finish drizzle a little olive oil over. Serves 6.

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FILLET STEAK WITH SAUTÉED OYSTER MUSHROOMS, MULLED WINE JELLY & ROASTED GARLIC CUSTARD

For most people, fillet is the premium cut from a steer. Aged and cooked correctly, there is no more tender cut rendered from a cattle beast. We have served tens of thousands of fillet steaks at Logan Brown since opening in 1996 and it is still by far the most popular dish on the menu. And for me, a perfectly cooked, well-aged fillet steak with a little jus and perhaps a small pool of béarnaise on the side is a culinary treat I never seem to tire of.

This recipe is a favourite of mine and the wonderful earthy flavours beg to have a delicious Hawke's Bay Syrah served alongside.

Roasted Garlic Custard

- 250g cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1½ cups cream
- ¼ cup milk
- ½ cup roasted garlic, drained
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 whole egg
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Place the garlic in a small ovenproof dish, pour the olive oil over, cover with tinfoil and place in the oven. Check after 40 minutes. The cloves should be slightly golden and very soft to touch.

Remove from the oven and cool then store in a jar in the fridge. These last indefinitely in the oil.

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Place the cream and milk in a small saucepan over low heat and bring to a simmer.

Place the roasted garlic in a medium bowl along with the egg yolks and the whole egg. With a wand blender, process until smooth.

Once the cream and milk have reached a simmer, remove from the heat and let cool for 5 minutes then place in a jug. Slowly pour it into the egg mix while whisking continuously.

Season with salt and pepper then pass through a fine sieve. Pour the custard into 2 large ramekins, filling to 1cm from the top. Place the ramekins in an ovenproof dish and pour hot water into the dish so it comes at least halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Tightly cover with tinfoil and place carefully in the oven.

Check after 20 minutes then at 10-minute intervals. The custards are ready when they are mostly set but still slightly "nervous" in the centre when you give them a little shake.

Remove and let cool, uncovered in the water bath, then refrigerate to fully set.

Mulled Wine Jelly

- ¼ cup red wine
- ¼ cup port
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 star anise
- ½ cinnamon stick
- 4 cloves
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- 2 strips orange peel
- 2½ sheets gelatine leaves

Place all the ingredients except the gelatine in a small saucepan over low heat. Simmer gently for 6 minutes so the sugar dissolves and the wine is infused with the spices. Remove from the heat and cool slightly.

Soak the gelatine in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes. Once soft and pliable, squeeze out excess water and add to the mulled wine mixture. Stir well to incorporate.

Carefully strain through a fine sieve, discarding the spices.

While still just warm, pour the mulled wine jelly over the top of the set custards and place back in the fridge to set.

To cook and serve

- 6 x 180g fillet steaks, trimmed of silver skin
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- canola oil for frying
- 1 cup jus (I use European Gourmet demiglaze) or gravy
- 300g oyster mushrooms (separated)
- butter for frying
- 2 bunches watercress
- 30 cloves roasted garlic

Preheat the oven to 180°C. For the steaks, take some natural string or butcher's twine and tie around the outside of each one, making them tight and even.

Season the steaks liberally with sea salt and black pepper.

Place a skillet or sauté pan on high heat and add a little oil. Once hot, sear 3 steaks at a time until golden on each side then place in a roasting pan while you repeat with the remaining steaks. Once all seared, place in the oven for 5-10 minutes, depending on how well you like your steaks cooked. I always cook my steak medium (pink all the way through).

Once the steaks are cooked, remove from the oven and allow to rest for at least 6 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the jus in a small saucepan. Bring to the boil then pour into a preheated jug or teapot. Keep in a warm place.

Place a large frying pan on medium heat. Add a liberal amount of butter followed by the mushrooms. Season with sea salt and pepper. Cook until soft and golden brown then add the watercress. Remove from the heat, toss the watercress lightly so it just wilts from the heat of the mushrooms. Keep warm.

For the roasted garlic, heat up a non-stick pan, add the garlic and cook for a minute or so until hot through.

Divvy up the oyster mushrooms and watercress among the serving plates and top each portion with a steak. Using a tablespoon heated in hot water, place a spoonful of the custard on top of each steak so it begins to melt. Scatter about a few roasted garlic cloves then finish each plate with a little jus. Serves 6. •

Credits: Katherine Smyth plates handmade by Katherine Smyth; breadboards and La Chamba plate from Cranfields; all other props privately owned. For full details, see Credits Index.

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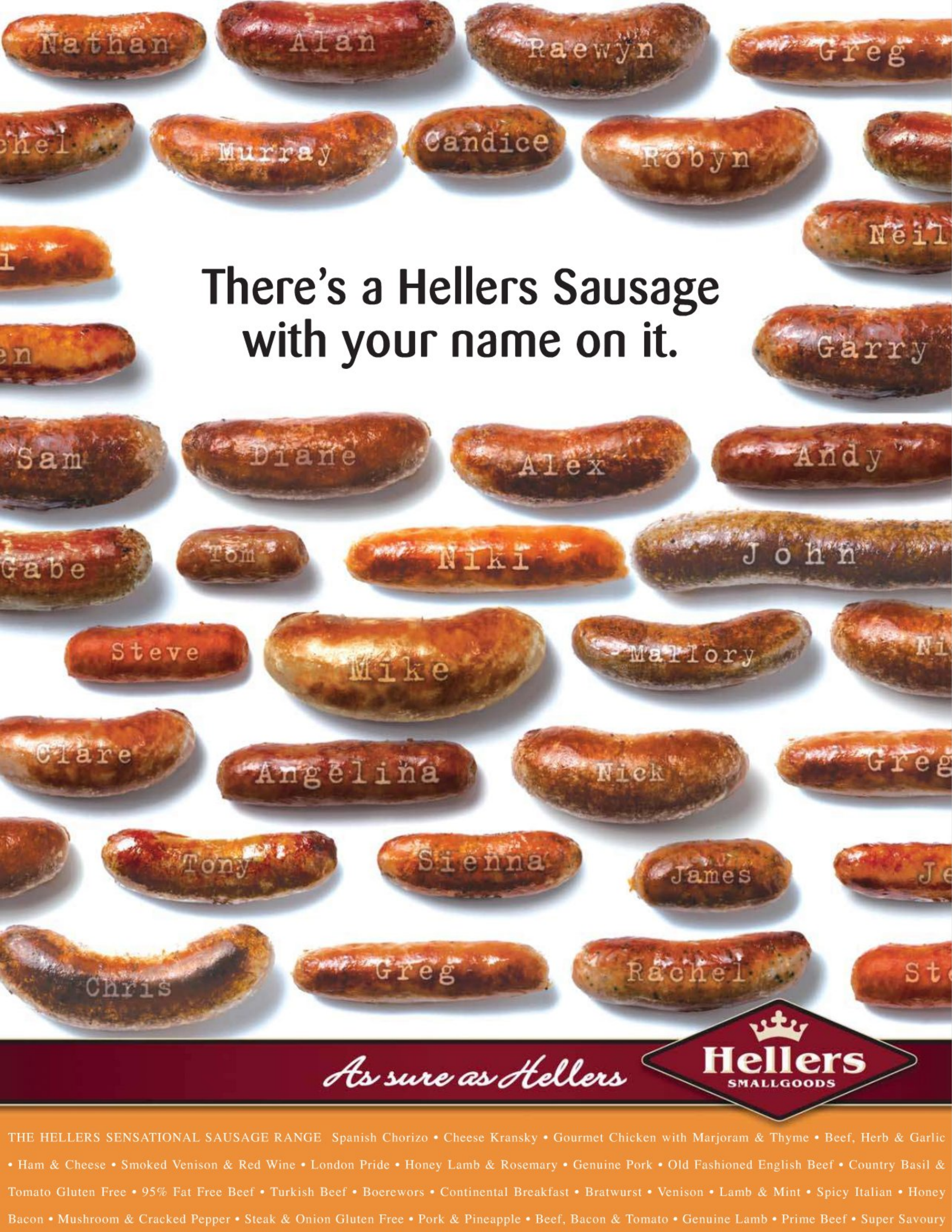

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BARBECUED CHICKEN MEATBALL SALAD WITH PRESERVED LEMON VINAIGRETTE
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imperial mince

INEXPENSIVE WITH A DRAB REPUTATION, MINCE CAN BE RAISED TO A CUT ABOVE, SAYS **RAY McVINNIE**

Mince is a way of making cheaper cuts of meat cook quickly and also of using the irregular leftovers from butchering. A grey slurry on soggy white bread that many of us remember as "mince on toast" or a sawdust-dry hamburger don't need to be the only ways of using mince. Meatballs, sausages, minced-meat sauces and minced meat as flavouring are found in most cuisines in many delicious forms. As well as the diverse dishes that can be created out of minced meat, it generally has the advantage for the thrifty cook of being one of the cheapest types of meat available. Economising on the meat means a little more latitude with the cost of other ingredients, although none of the ones in these dishes could be called wildly extravagant. It is also interesting that while these recipes are quite modest, several of them could easily do duty as the main course for a special dinner – the tofu dish, the uccelletti and the ragù all spring to mind.

Using a cheap cut of meat generally means a bit more work for the cook. The most expensive cuts – fillet steak, for example – are often tender and need the least work and little cooking. To create an interesting mince dish calls for a little culinary transformation. However, this doesn't need to involve intricate or complex cooking techniques. Good cooking is often just a matter of allowing enough time for the particular method and being organised, as I hope these will show.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY RAY McVINNIE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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UCCELLETTI WITH FENNEL, BUTTON MUSHROOMS & CREAM
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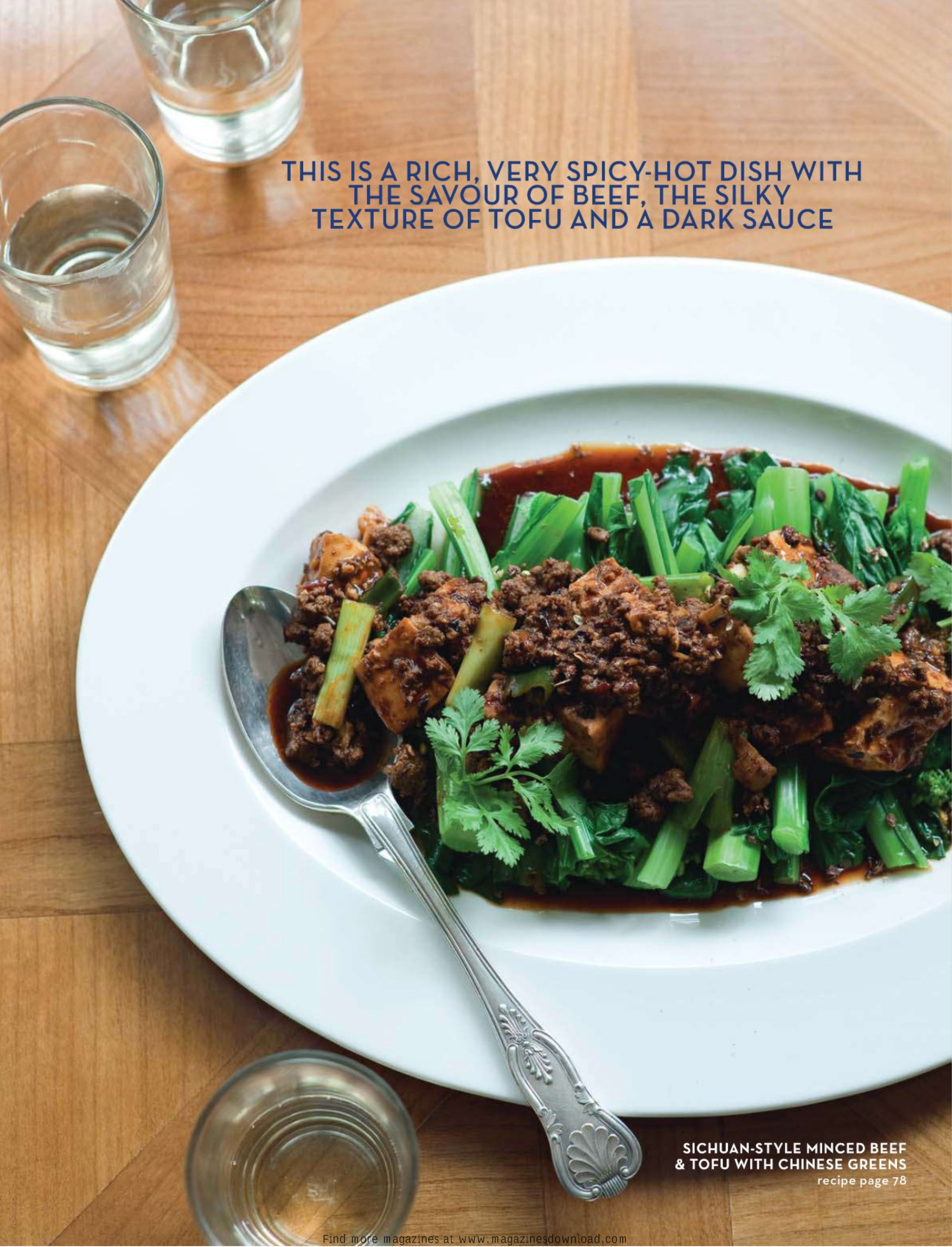
THIS IS A RICH, VERY SPICY-HOT DISH WITH THE SAVOUR OF BEEF, THE SILKY TEXTURE OF TOFU AND A DARK SAUCE



SICHUAN-STYLE MINCED BEEF & TOFU WITH CHINESE GREENS
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FETTUCCINE AL RAGÙ
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LAMB KOFTAS STUFFED WITH PRUNES & ONIONS ON EGGPLANT & TOMATOES WITH GOAT'S CHEESE SAUCE
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TO CREATE AN INTERESTING MINCE DISH CALLS FOR A LITTLE CULINARY TRANSFORMATION

UCCELLETTI WITH FENNEL, BUTTON MUSHROOMS & CREAM

This light, creamy fricassée-style stew would be perfect for a special dinner or Sunday lunch and goes well with a glass of Chardonnay.

"Uccelletti" is Italian for "little birds", so called because they look a bit like small birds trussed ready for roasting. And in this recipe they are just oval-shaped pork meatballs wrapped in bacon.

If you want to lash out a bit and make this recipe a little more deluxe, substitute prosciutto for the bacon and dry vermouth for the white wine.

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons finely sliced fresh sage leaves (or 1 tablespoon very finely chopped rosemary leaves)
- 3 anchovy fillets, finely chopped
- 750g minced pork
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 12 rashers rindless streaky bacon
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 carrot, diced 1cm
- 1 stick celery, finely diced
- 1 large bulb fennel, coarse stalks cut off (reserve the fronds for serving), halved, cored and sliced 1cm thick
- 250g button mushrooms, sliced
- 150ml dry white wine
- 250ml vegetable stock
- 250ml cream
- 6 slices toasted sourdough bread

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a frying pan over moderate heat, add the onion and sage, and fry gently for about 10 minutes until the onion is soft. Remove from the pan, cool then place in a bowl with the anchovies and pork. Season (easy on the salt as the anchovies will be salty) and mix well.

Shape into 12 even-sized oval balls and wrap each in a rasher of bacon then pin the bacon with a toothpick so it is secure.

Gently heat the remaining oil in the pan and carefully brown the uccelletti on both sides then remove and reserve.

Clean the pan then place over moderate heat and gently melt the butter. Add the carrot, celery, fennel and mushrooms. Cover and braise gently without browning for about 10 minutes until the fennel has softened.

Uncover, increase the heat and add the wine. Allow it to bubble for 30 seconds then add the uccelletti and stock. Cover, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.

Uncover and remove the uccelletti and vegetables with a slotted spoon, draining well. Reserve.

Bring the liquid in the pan to the boil and add the cream. Boil for about 4 minutes until slightly thickened. Carefully return the uccelletti and vegetables to the pan, bring back to the boil, taste, season and serve, toothpicks discarded from the uccelletti, on the toasted bread with tender young fennel fronds sprinkled on top. Serves 6.

SICHUAN-STYLE MINCED BEEF & TOFU WITH CHINESE GREENS

An extremely tasty dish, this is a favourite of mine and my recollection of the traditional Sichuan Ma Po tofu with minced beef I ate at the excellent Sichuan Da Ping Huo restaurant in Hong Kong. I have used more beef than is traditional for this dish.

This is a rich, very spicy-hot dish with the savour of beef, the silky texture of tofu and a dark sauce that I serve on steamed Chinese greens.

- 600g firm tofu, well drained
- 4 tablespoons soybean oil
- 2 tablespoons Chinese salted black beans, well rinsed, soaked in cold water for 10 minutes, well drained and chopped
- 400g minced beef
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped ginger
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons chilli bean paste (I used Master Sauce Fermented Chilli Bean Sauce)
- 2 tablespoons dark soy sauce
- 4 spring onions, cut into 3cm lengths
- 50ml Shaoxing Chinese cooking wine or medium sherry
- 250ml chicken stock
- salt to taste
- 300g Chinese greens such as baby bok choy, choy sum or gai lan, coarse stalks removed and cut into 10cm lengths, or bok choy quartered lengthwise
- 1 tablespoon toasted lightly crushed Sichuan peppercorns
- coriander sprigs for serving

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Place the tofu between 2 plates, put a light weight on top and let it drain for 15 minutes or so until it becomes firmer and less likely to fall apart when cooked. Remove from the plates and cut into 3cm cubes then reserve.

Heat the oil in a wok over moderate heat and add the black beans and minced beef. Stir-fry until the water comes out of the mince, all the lumps are broken up and then the water evaporates and the beef browns and has an appetising caramelly aroma.

Add the ginger, garlic and chilli bean paste, and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Add the tofu and soy sauce, mix well and cook 1 minute then add the spring onions, cooking wine and stock, and mix well without breaking up the tofu. Simmer for 5 minutes, taste and season with salt. Keep hot.

Steam or boil the greens until tender but still crisp to the bite. Serve the beef and tofu on the greens and sprinkle the Sichuan peppercorns and coriander on top. Or serve everything separately for everyone to help themselves. Good with fresh rice noodles, dried egg noodles or steamed rice. Serves 6.

BARBECUED CHICKEN MEATBALL SALAD WITH PRESERVED LEMON VINAIGRETTE

This salad wakes up jaded taste buds on a hot day. The savoury chicken and rich, salty dressing go well with the cooked vegetables, the bitterness of the raw radicchio and the pepperiness of the radishes. If radicchio is unavailable use a crunchy lettuce like cos.

The meatballs are skewered so they can be easily barbecued or panfried.

- 800g minced chicken
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon very finely chopped rosemary leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- ¼ cup finely grated parmesan
- finely chopped zest of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon flaky sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup small torn pieces sourdough bread
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra for brushing
- 4 zucchini, thinly sliced lengthwise
- ¾ preserved lemon, pips removed
- 200ml extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 200g green beans, stalk ends cut off
- 6 bamboo skewers
- 1 handful radicchio leaves (I used the long-leafed green variety)
- 3 radishes, thinly sliced
- lemon wedges for serving

Put the chicken, garlic, rosemary, parsley, parmesan, lemon zest, salt and a good grind of pepper in a bowl.

Place the bread in a bowl, pour the milk over, mix well, squeeze a little and let it soak in then add to the chicken along with the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Mix well and, with oiled hands, form into 24 large walnut-sized balls.

Bring a wide saucepan of water to the boil and drop in the meatballs (in batches if necessary). Bring back to the boil then simmer gently for about 4 minutes or until the meatballs float. Remove with a slotted spoon, cool then thread 4 meatballs on to each skewer. Reserve.

Brush the zucchini lightly with olive oil and barbecue or panfry until well browned and tender. Remove and keep warm.

Place the preserved lemon, extra virgin olive oil and lemon juice in a small blender and process until creamy. Taste and season. This is the dressing. Reserve.

Drop the beans in a saucepan of boiling salted water. Bring back to the boil and boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and drain well.

Brush the skewers with olive oil and barbecue or panfry for about 3 minutes on each side until well browned.

Place the radicchio on a large serving platter. Scatter the beans, zucchini and radishes on top, place the skewers on top and drizzle the dressing over everything. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing. Serves 6 as a first course, lunch or a main course with steamed rice.

FETTUCCINE AL RAGÙ

This may look like just another version of "spag bol" but it is in fact a more refined variation. It is my take on a traditional meat sauce for pasta from Emilia-Romagna, a region of Italy famous for its elegant cooking, and is based on a recipe from my treasured *Enciclopedia della Cucina Regionale Italiana*, edited by Silvano Boroli. It has no pictures, but it does have 4000 definitive recipes from every region of Italy.

The sauce is robustly meaty, but summery enough for light homemade or bought egg pastas. Or, although untraditional, it also works well on thin spaghetti.

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GOOD COOKING IS OFTEN JUST A MATTER OF ALLOWING ENOUGH TIME AND BEING ORGANISED

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 50g skinned pancetta, finely diced
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 stick celery, thinly sliced
- 1 carrot, finely diced
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- large pinch of freshly ground nutmeg
- 350g each minced pork and lean beef
- 150ml dry white wine
- 8 ripe tomatoes, peeled, cored and chopped
- 250ml beef stock (I used the Essential Cuisine brand)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 400g fresh fettuccine, or dried Italian egg pasta
- freshly grated parmesan for serving

Gently melt the butter over moderate heat without browning. Add the pancetta, onion, celery, carrot, lemon zest, bay leaf and nutmeg, and fry gently without browning for about 15 minutes until the onion is soft.

Add the mince and continue frying. As the meat gets hot, break it up with a wooden spoon so there are no big lumps. Turn up the heat and add the wine, let it bubble for 30 seconds then add the tomatoes and stock.

Bring to the boil and boil gently for 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until thick and jammy and reduced by half then taste and season.

Boil the fettuccine in well-salted water until al dente. Drain and place in a large warmed pasta bowl. Add the sauce, toss and serve with plenty of freshly grated parmesan for sprinkling on top. Serves 6.

LAMB KOFTAS STUFFED WITH PRUNES & ONIONS ON EGGPLANT & TOMATOES WITH GOAT'S CHEESE SAUCE

Koftas are Middle Eastern meatballs, usually lamb, often with bulgur wheat added, which is pounded or processed until smooth. Here they are made only with lamb, flavoured with allspice and stuffed with slow-fried onions and prunes. Fried or barbecued, they are served on oven-roasted eggplant with tomatoes and a creamy soft goat's cheese sauce. Stuffing the koftas is a simple process – just persevere and use oiled hands, as the meat is sticky.

- 100g sour cream
- 100g creamy goat's feta
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 75ml extra virgin olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra for frying and brushing
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- ½ onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup thinly sliced prunes
- 500g minced lamb
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 egg
- 2 eggplants, sliced 2cm thick
- 4 ripe tomatoes, halved, peeled, seeds removed with a teaspoon and sliced into thin wedges
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
- mint leaves for serving

For the sauce, put the sour cream, goat's cheese, lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil in a bowl and mix well until creamy and smooth. Taste, season and reserve at room temperature.

Heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil over moderate heat and add the garlic, onion and prunes. Gently fry, without browning, for 15 minutes or until the onions and prunes are soft. Remove from the heat and cool, taste and season well.

Put the lamb in a food processor and process until smooth. Add the allspice, egg and 1 teaspoon of salt and pulse to mix well.

Oil your hands and form the lamb mixture into 18 x 4cm-diameter balls. Push your thumb into the middle of one to make the deepest impression you can without breaking it. Place 1 teaspoon of the onion mix in the depression, wrap the sides around, pinch the edges together then smooth and roll into a ball without disturbing the filling. Flatten slightly and reserve. Repeat with the remaining mixture.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Brush the eggplant slices with oil and place on a baking tray side by side. Place in the oven and roast for 10-15 minutes until browned then turn the slices over and roast a further 10 minutes until well browned. Take out of the oven, remove from the tray and keep warm.

Heat a little olive oil in a frying pan and gently panfry the koftas, turning occasionally, for about 10 minutes or brush the koftas with oil and cook on a moderate barbecue. Serve 3 koftas per person on the warm eggplant slices with the tomato wedges sprinkled on top, the goat's cheese sauce drizzled over and sesame seeds and mint leaves sprinkled on top. Serves 6. •

Credits: French table and chair from Philippe's French Antiques & Interiors; flooring is Fume Gris European Oak from B & O Casa; Robert Gordon dinner plate, Adama service plate, Enza oval platter, Rosenthal Moon pasta plate and Hemstitch napkin from The Studio of Tableware; Antique Kings pattern knife and fork and Victorian period knife and fork from Antiques of Epsom. All other props privately owned. For full details, see Credits Index.

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Tamarind sauce:

2 tablespoons tamarind paste
2 tablespoons reduced salt soy sauce
1 inch piece fresh ginger, grated
juice of 1 lime
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 red chilli, thinly sliced

250g packet Regal Salmon Fresh Cut Escalopes
2 tablespoons green peppercorns, drained
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup roasted unsalted peanuts
2 cloves garlic, crushed
To serve: salad made of thin slices of radishes, mungbean sprouts, Asian mushrooms, spring onions and garlic chives.

Jeff's Regal Salmon Escalopes with Green Peppercorn & Peanut Spice Crust

Serves 2

1. Preheat an oven grill to high. In a food processor or blender whizz together the green peppercorns, cinnamon, peanuts and garlic until resembles a rough crumb. Lay the salmon escalopes, with skin side down on an oven tray lined with baking paper and greased with a little cooking oil. Spread over the peanut and peppercorn mixture on top of the salmon.
2. Grill in oven for 10 minutes until crispy, keep an eye on it so the topping does not burn. Serve with tamarind sauce, steamed baby potatoes and a simple salad made with spring onions, pink radishes, bean sprouts and mushrooms.
3. To make the tamarind sauce, leave the tamarind paste to soak in the reduced salt soy sauce for 20 minutes. When soft mix well with the ginger and sesame oil. Serve alongside salmon garnished with slices red chilli.

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NECTARINES & PEACHES IN ROSÉ JELLY WITH CHANTILLY CREAM
recipe page 90

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ODE TO AUTUMN

CELIA HARVEY MAKES THE MOST OF THE SEASON'S STONE FRUIT FOR IRRESISTIBLE DESSERTS

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY CELIA HARVEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT / STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

THE LATE-SUMMER harvest of New Zealand stone fruit brings us ripe fruit dripping luscious juices and full of flavour. At this time of year little can taste more splendid than fruit served just as it is. But the careful cooking of stone fruits can only enhance their flavour and here they lend heavenly sweetness to these great desserts. Little needs doing to them but poaching or baking quickly in pastry or batter so they just split and release their fleshy ripeness.

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Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness! Close bosom friend of the maturing sun

APRICOT & BROWN SUGAR TARTES TATIN
recipe page 91

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DARK CHERRY CLAFOUTIS
recipe page 90

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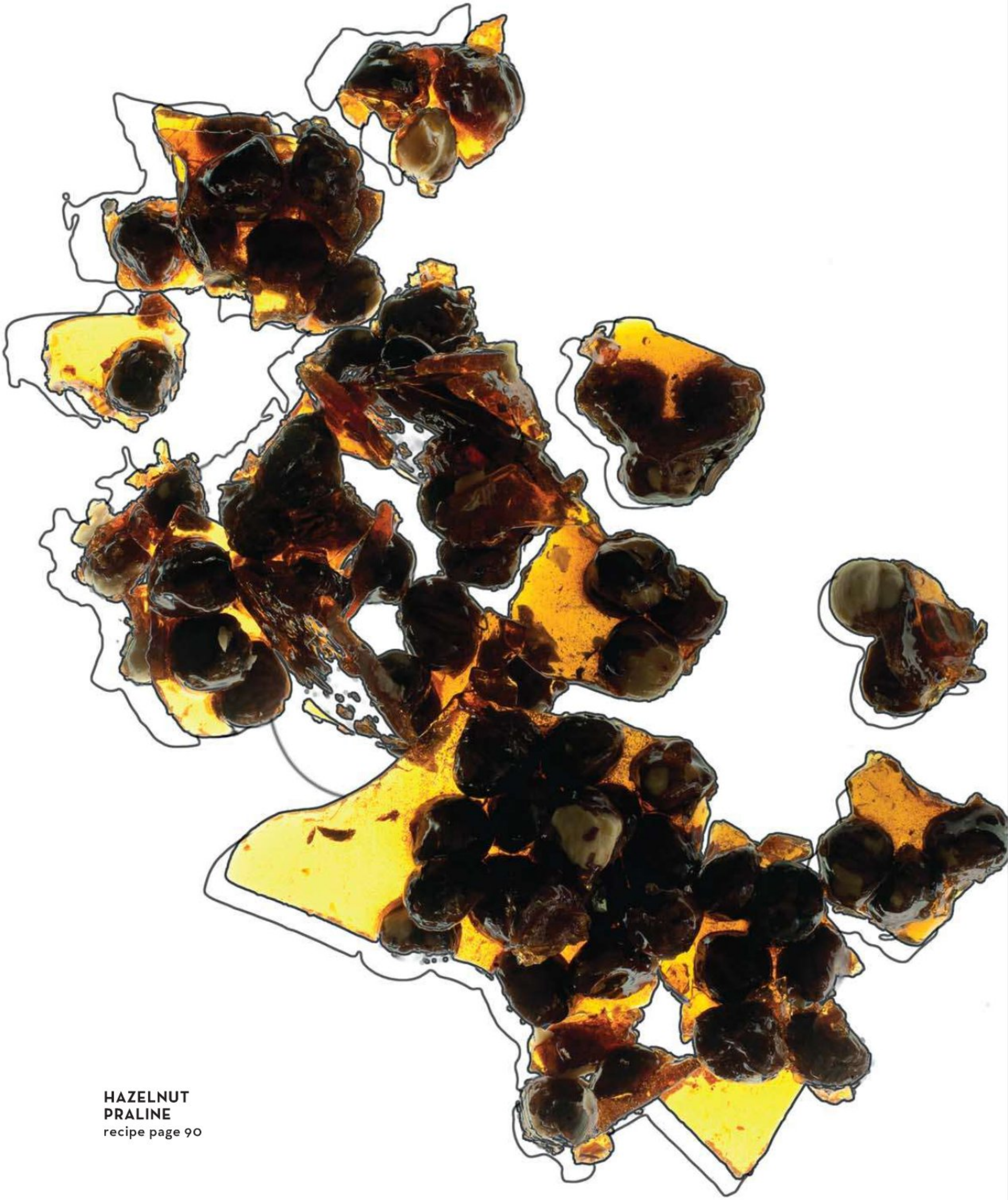

HAZELNUT PRALINE
recipe page 90

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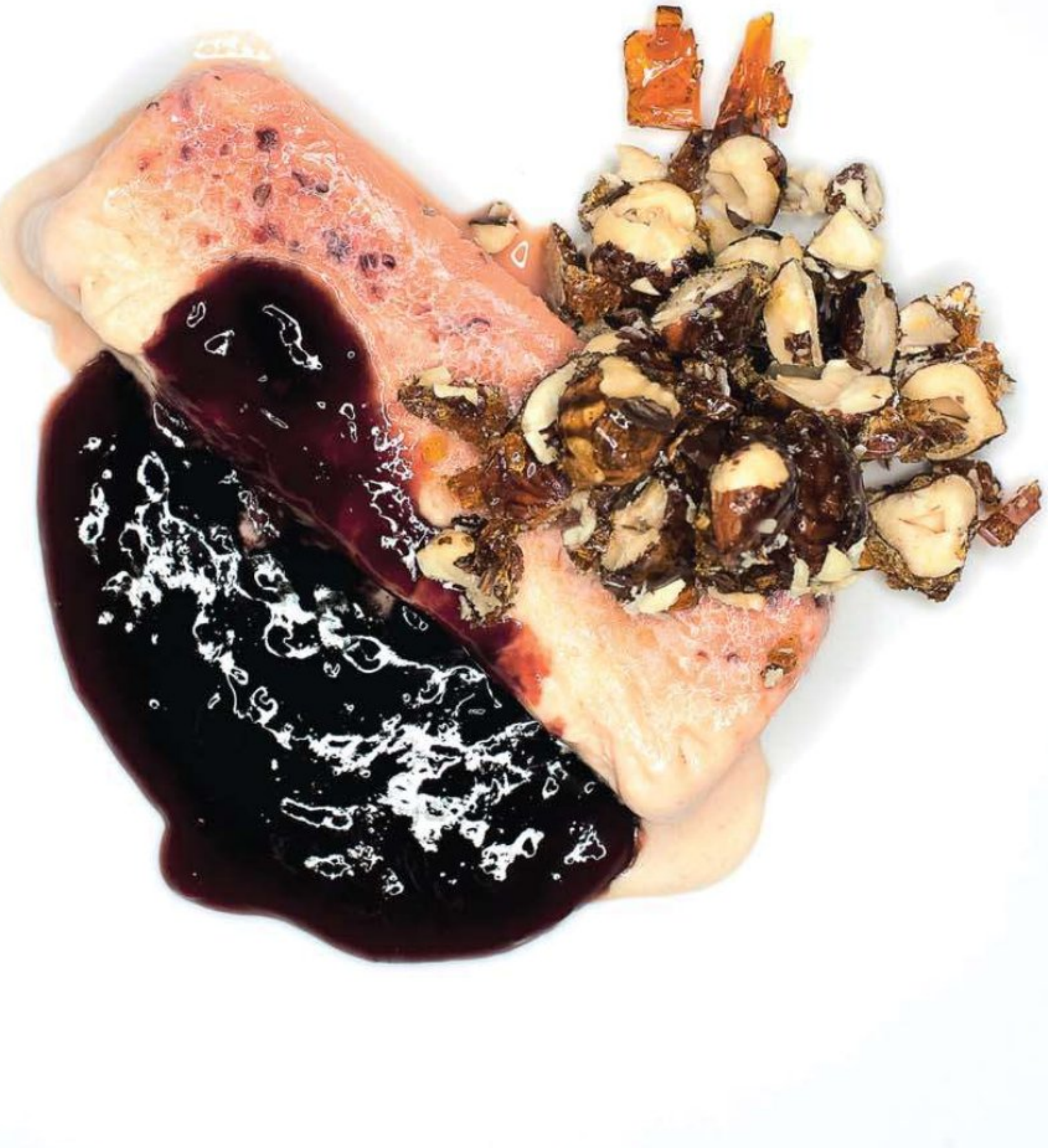
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that
round the thatch-eaves run



FROZEN PLUM PARFAIT, HAZELNUT PRALINE & PLUM SAUCE
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ROAST PEACHES WITH LOQUAT FOOL

recipe page 91

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To bend with apples the
mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with
ripeness to the core

– FROM "ODE TO AUTUMN", JOHN KEATS

ROAST PEACHES WITH LOQUAT FOOL & GINGER SNAPS
recipe page 91

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DARK CHERRY CLAFOUTIS

To me, the arrival of cherries heralds the start of the stone fruit season. And it's the ideal time to make this dish as its success lies in using only the best simple ingredients. Pitting cherries is easy with an olive stoner, or by tapping and rolling them gently under a glass. You can use other fruit instead of cherries, such as late-season plums or greengages, or apples in winter.

- 4 eggs
- 100g sugar
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon kirsch or dark rum
- 100g flour
- 350ml milk
- 20g butter, softened
- 400g cherries, washed and pitted
- icing sugar for dusting

Beat the eggs and sugar for about 5 minutes until light and frothy. This is done more easily with an electric beater than by hand whisking. Add the vanilla, salt and kirsch.

Sift in the flour and fold the mixture over gently. Add the milk and just mix through.

Butter a 20cm-24cm ovenproof dish with the soft butter and place the cherries in. Pour the batter over and bake for 40-45 minutes at 180°C.

Test it is done by inserting a toothpick or skewer in the centre, which should come out clean.

Dredge with icing sugar and serve immediately. Serves 6.

FROZEN PLUM PARFAIT, HAZELNUT PRALINE & PLUM SAUCE

You need to start this recipe a day ahead and it's best eaten within a day or two. You can use any fruit, but you may need to adjust the quantity of sugar according to the sweetness of the fruit.

When making praline you need to work quickly and carefully – caramel can spit and burn.

Hazelnut Praline

- 1 cup sugar
- ⅓ cup water
- 1 cup hazelnuts, skin on

Place a sheet of baking paper on a tray and spray with non-stick spray. Put the sugar in a heavy-based pan and add the water. Let it stand until the water has been absorbed. Place over medium heat and bring to the boil until it starts to turn golden. Remove from the heat and quickly stir in the nuts with a wooden spoon.

Return to the medium heat until the caramel softens again and starts to darken to a medium mahogany colour, which will happen rapidly. Do not stir at this stage or it will bubble and spit dangerously.

When it has darkened, carefully spread it quickly on the baking sheet. Leave to cool completely before handling. Slide the praline off the baking paper on to a clean surface. Crush with a rolling pin or chop with a very sharp knife. I find it too hard for the average kitchen processor. Makes 2 cups.

Frozen Plum Parfait

- 300g plum flesh, coarsely chopped
- juice of 1 lemon
- 30ml orange liqueur, or cherry or plum brandy
- 5 egg yolks
- 100g sugar
- 300ml cream, softly whipped

Line a loaf tin with plastic wrap so it overlaps the sides to make it easy to remove the parfait (or you can use lined individual moulds).

In a food processer blend the fruit, lemon juice and liqueur until smooth. Pass through a sieve into a bowl. You need 250ml of purée.

Whisk the yolks and sugar in a large metal bowl over a simmering pan of water until very thick and creamy. When it is thick and forms ribbons, take it off the heat and fold in the fruit purée then the whipped cream.

Gently stir in 1 cup of the coarsely chopped praline. Pour into the tin or moulds immediately and freeze overnight.

Plum Sauce

- 300g ripe plums, washed, halved and stones removed
- 120g sugar
- piece of orange peel
- 1 stick cinnamon

Place the plums in a saucepan with the sugar, peel and cinnamon.

Add enough water to just cover the fruit. Place on a low heat and simmer until the plums break down and turn to pulp. Discard the cinnamon stick and the peel.

Strain through a sieve then return the liquid to the heat and boil to reduce the sauce down until thick. Cool completely before serving over the parfait.

To serve

Carefully lift the parfait out on to a tray or board and slice with a warmed knife. Place a slice on each serving plate and spoon a generous amount of sauce over. Sprinkle liberally with crushed praline. Serve immediately. Serves 6-8.

NECTARINES & PEACHES IN ROSÉ JELLY WITH CHANTILLY CREAM

Set in individual glasses or coupes, these jellies make an elegant dessert, with delicacy and freshness in flavour that is a refreshing finish. A jelly always tastes best when it is lightly set. I find leaf gelatine the best to use, as powder is too heavy. If you can't find rosewater, substitute 350g raspberries simmered and strained.

You need to start this recipe at least 8 hours ahead for setting time.

- 3 ripe, blemish-free peaches
- 3 ripe, blemish-free nectarines
- 50g caster sugar
- 500ml rosé or white wine
- 2 teaspoons rosewater
- 2 leaves gelatine (I used gold), soaked in cold water (or 1 sachet Davis powdered gelatine)
- 100ml cream
- 1 tablespoon icing sugar
- rose petals for garnish

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Bring a large saucepan of water to a simmer then, using a slotted spoon, blanch each peach and nectarine in the water for 2-3 seconds. Have a bowl of iced water alongside to place them in immediately to refreshen.

Their skins should have split so you can peel them with a sharp knife. Slice the flesh into quarters then carefully work the wedges off the stone. You want smooth slices. Set aside.

Combine the sugar and wine in a saucepan over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and add the rosewater while it is still hot.

Squeeze the gelatine leaves of excess water and whisk into the wine mixture. (If using powder, add to the sugar and wine mixture when it just starts to simmer then remove when dissolved.) Allow to cool slightly.

Arrange the nectarine and peach slices in glasses or moulds, gently ladle the warm wine mixture over – not too fast or you will have bubbles around the fruit.

Place on a tray in the fridge and leave to set.

To serve, whisk the cream and icing sugar together to soft folds then pipe on top of the jellies and sprinkle with rose petals. Serves 6.

ROAST PEACHES WITH LOQUAT FOOL & GINGER SNAPS

When you roast peaches whole just until their skins split they retain their juices and the butter added here makes them moist and soft.

Loquats, originally from China, can be found in many gardens in New Zealand. They have a large dark stone or two, which must be removed before cooking. Their flesh is very sweet and juicy – better eaten overripe. You can use apricots if loquats can't be sourced.

For the peaches

- **6 ripe peaches**
- **100g butter, softened**
- **300g caster sugar**

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Wash and dry the peaches to remove the fuzz. Rub the whole surface of each peach with softened butter then coat with sugar. Place on an oven tray lined with baking paper and bake until the skin splits and the peaches start to roast evenly (around 10 minutes). Remove and cool before serving.

Loquat Fool

- **200g loquats (or apricots)**
- **juice of 1 lemon**
- **50g sugar**
- **150ml cream**

Soak the loquats in boiling water to split their skins then drain and cut into halves. Remove the stones with a sharp knife.

Place the flesh in a saucepan with the lemon juice and sugar then simmer covered until pulpy (about 10 minutes). Mash with a fork and set aside to cool.

Whip the cream to soft peaks then fold in the cooled loquat pulp. Do not overwhip so you retain the rippled streaks of colour from the fruit. Pipe into the ginger snaps and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Ginger Snaps

- **50g butter**
- **50g caster sugar**
- **2 tablespoons golden syrup**
- **50g flour**
- **1 teaspoon ground ginger**
- **1 tablespoon ginger wine**

Preheat the oven to 180°C. In a saucepan, melt the butter slowly with the sugar and golden syrup. When melted, cool slightly then stir in the sifted flour and ginger. Lastly, stir in the ginger wine.

Place heaped teaspoonfuls of the mixture on a tray lined with baking paper, leaving plenty of space for the mix to spread out.

Bake for 5-7 minutes. Cool very slightly then remove from the tray with a spatula and shape in to cylinders around the handle of a wooden spoon or rolling pin. They will keep for 1-2 days in an airtight container. Makes 12.

APRICOT & BROWN SUGAR TARTES TATIN

These French open-faced caramel tarts with slices or halves of fruit are cooked upside down. The fruit holds better unpeeled and adds to the simple, rustic beauty of these tarts. I made four individual ones, but you can also make one large one.

- **16 ripe apricots**
- **200g unsalted butter, cut into cubes**
- **150g light brown sugar**
- **1 packet puff pastry, divided into 80g per tart**
- **crème fraîche or whipped cream to serve**

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Wash and dry the apricots, cut them into even halves and remove the stones.

In a heavy-based skillet that can go in the oven, or 4 Tatin pans (about 10cm diameter and non-stick), place the cubes of butter. Melt on the stovetop until it starts to bubble then sprinkle in the sugar and allow it to dissolve. Carefully place the apricot halves skin side down. They should fit in snugly. The sugar mixture should be caramelising and bubbling around them.

Turn the heat off and leave the pan or pans to cool slightly.

On a floured bench, roll the pastry out until thin enough to see your hand under it. Cut into 4 discs slightly larger than the Tatin pans or into one large one.

Place the pastry carefully over the fruit and tuck in around the edges.

Bake on a tray to dark golden (20-25 minutes) then remove from the oven and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Place a serving plate over each tart, invert and turn the tart out. Take great care as hot caramel can leak out.

Serve with a generous dollop of crème fraîche or cream. Serves 4. •

Credits: 250° plate and small ceramic button plates from Nest; Rosenthal TAC plate and Cutipol Noor fork from The Studio of Tableware; all other props privately owned. For full details, see Credits Index.

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Popular Culture

WHICHEVER WAY YOU SLICE IT, CHEESE MAKES A GREAT ADDITION TO MANY DISHES, SAYS FIONA SMITH

Some cheeses are much more suited to cooking than others. It would be a crime to bake a perfectly gooey washed-rind cheese into a tart, for example, but other cheeses cry out for accompaniments. Feta is a prime example. Often very salty, it can be pleasant soaked to remove the salt and marinated in herbs and oil, but really comes into its own in a salad, crumbled over vegetables or, as I have done here, tossed through a flavoursome pilaf. Or cheddar, which I adore on its own, with its texture and punchy taste lends itself to cooking, melting easily and giving wonderful cheesy flavour. I have put together examples of cheeses that are good for cooking and how to use them. I have also included tips on putting together a great cheeseboard.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY FIONA SMITH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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SHEEP'S CHEESE & ARTICHOKE LAHMACUN WITH GRILLED TOMATO & CAPSICUM SALSA

recipe page 98

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RATATOUILLE WITH
CHEDDAR DUMPLINGS
recipe page 98

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PILAF OF BEETROOT, FETA & TURMERIC
recipe page 100

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CHEESE TART WITH OATMEAL CRUST
recipe page 101

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MELTING POINTS

Some cheeses are much more suited to cooking than others. So, while there is absolutely no reason not to experiment with your favourites in recipes, here are a few tips to help keep disaster at bay. As with all things, there are exceptions to these guidelines.

- Hard cheeses are more tolerant of high temperatures than soft because they have a higher fat content and less protein so are less inclined to curdle or become rubbery and stringy. This is why cheeses such as cheddar and gruyère are so versatile in cooking, and parmesan and pecorino are perfect in crunchy toppings. Soft cheeses are better suited to indirect heat and long, slow cooking methods such as stuffings and fillings.

- For all cheeses it is best to use an indirect or low heat. Even when grilling, keep the cheese a good distance from the grill. Or, as in the case of haloumi, cook very quickly in a hot grill pan or on a barbecue to crisp the outside without overcooking the entire cheese.

- Where you can, such as in sauces and toppings, add cheese in the last stages of cooking.

- Use stronger-flavoured cheese for cooking as you will need less. The flavour of cheese can also lessen with cooking.

- Reduce the quantity of salt or season the dish after adding cheese as it can be quite salty (especially feta, but even a cheddar can add quite a bit of salt).

- You can freeze excess cheese to use later. While many will be no good for eating (goat's and sheep's milk cheeses freeze better than cow's milk) all frozen cheese is fine for cooking.

SHEEP'S CHEESE & ARTICHOKE LAHMACUN WITH GRILLED TOMATO & CAPSICUM SALSA

On a recent visit to Istanbul I ate a wonderful lahmacun – a thin-based Turkish pizza – in a tiny restaurant just outside the Grand Bazaar, sitting by the roadside with the wood-fire oven blazing. Topped with soft fresh sheep's cheese, the lahmacun was the best I've tasted. I find sheep's milk feta works well and I use Meredith Dairy or Blue River Tussock Creek feta.

Grilled Tomato & Capsicum Salsa

- **2 red capsicums**
- **4 medium tomatoes**
- **1 red onion, finely chopped**
- **3 cloves garlic, chopped**
- **½ cup pine nuts, toasted**
- **1-2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh chilli**
- **1 teaspoon sugar**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- **¼ cup chopped coriander**

Place the capsicums directly over the flame of a gas burner or barbecue, or under a preheated grill, turning regularly, until completely blackened and soft. Put in a large bowl, cover with a lid or plastic wrap and let them sweat for 10 minutes.

Likewise, place the tomatoes over the flame of a gas burner or barbecue, or under a preheated grill, turning regularly, until charred and softened. This doesn't take long so keep an eye on them as you don't want them to get mushy. Slice in half, and scoop out and discard the seeds. Chop the flesh and charred skin finely. Place in a bowl.

Peel the blackened skin off the capsicums, remove the stalk and seeds, and discard. Chop the flesh finely and add to the tomatoes along with the remaining ingredients and mix to combine. Set aside.

Sheep's Cheese & Artichoke Lahmacun

- **250g high-grade white flour**
- **200g wholemeal flour**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **2 teaspoons (7g) dried active yeast**
- **300ml warm water**
- **oil for oiling the bowl**
- **350g sheep's milk feta**
- **2 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- **50g unsalted butter, softened**
- **340g marinated artichoke hearts, drained**
- **sumac for sprinkling (optional)**

Sieve the flours into a large bowl then mix in the salt and yeast. Mixing by hand, start incorporating the water until you have a ball of dough. Tip the dough on to a floured board and knead for 5 minutes until smooth and elastic. This can be done in an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook or a heavy-duty food processor fitted with a plastic blade and processing the dough for 1½ minutes.

Lightly oil a bowl and roll the dough around in it until coated. Cover lightly with plastic wrap or a plastic bag and leave to rise in a warm place for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 230°C.

Crumble the feta into a bowl, add the eggs and butter then mix.

If the artichokes are whole, cut each into quarters.

Divide the dough into 4 and roll or stretch out to about 30cm x 18cm canoe-shaped flatbreads. Turn up the edges to form a little lip. Spread a quarter of the filling over each base and top with a few artichokes.

Bake on a baking tray lined with baking paper for 6-8 minutes until golden but still soft. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with a little sumac if using. Serve with the salsa on the side for people to spoon on to their slices. Makes 4 to feed 4-8 people.

RATATOUILLE WITH CHEDDAR DUMPLINGS

Ratatouille is an ideal collaboration of late-summer vegetables, so make the most of them. You can serve this as a vegetarian dish or it is an ideal side dish to accompany barbecued meat.

I use a 24cm Le Creuset casserole for this dish. If you do not have a pot that big you may want to use two smaller ones as you need the room to fit the dumplings on top. And make the ratatouille first as the dumplings should be cooked straight away. >

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MASCARPONE & ALMOND FLAN WITH AMARETTO-POACHED NECTARINES recipe page 101

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Ratatouille

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- small bunch flat-leafed parsley, chopped
- 1 large eggplant, cut into 2cm dice
- 3 red and/or yellow capsicums, seeded and diced 2cm
- 4 medium zucchini, thickly sliced crosswise
- 250ml red wine
- 4 medium tomatoes, cored and finely chopped
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- freshly ground black pepper

Heat the olive oil in a large, preferably heavy-based saucepan or casserole over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and parsley, and sauté for 10 minutes, stirring regularly.

Add the eggplant, fry for 5 minutes then add the capsicums and zucchini. Fry for a few minutes then add the wine and bring to the boil. Add all the tomatoes and the salt, and bring back to the boil. Remove from the heat and season with fresh black pepper to taste.

Place the dumplings (recipe follows) on top of the mixture a little spaced apart. Place in the oven and cook for 15 minutes until the dumplings have risen and are golden. Serves 6.

Cheddar Dumplings

- 3 cups self-raising flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 75g butter
- 150g cheddar, grated
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped rosemary and/or thyme
- 275ml milk

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs (this can be done in a food processor). Mix in the cheese and herbs. Using a knife, gently mix in the milk to form a dough (add a bit more if the dough doesn't come together easily; if it is a bit sticky, coat your hands in flour to shape).

Turn the dough out on to a floured board and gently pat out until around 3cm thick. Using a 5cm-diameter cutter, cut out dumplings (you should get about 14) and place on a floured tray until needed.

BOARD GAME PLAN

To offer a cheeseboard that everyone will enjoy, choose a few cheeses of different types:

ORIGIN Cow, goat, sheep, buffalo

TASTE Strong, mild, blue, tangy

TEXTURE AND STYLE Fresh, soft, hard, washed rind

COLOUR AND SHAPE While having no impact on taste, the look of a plate of cheese is important, so make sure you have variety. For example, while a strong aged cheddar, a young mild gouda and a nutty emmental all taste very different, they look quite similar.

- Purists like to eat cheese on its own, but it is always a good idea to have a selection of crackers (plain flavoured such as water crackers are best as they don't mask the flavour of the cheese) and fresh bread or both.
- Fresh fruit and nuts such as grapes, figs, pears, walnuts and pecans or dried fruit can complement cheese well, but the selection will depend on your cheese.
- There are some wonderful fruit and nut pastes available that can really lift a cheese. Quince paste is a traditional favourite.
- While choosing a range of cheeses will keep everyone happy, if you know your diners well, serving one hero cheese can be stunning. With so many fantastic artisan cheesemakers around, finding that one special cheese is now easier than ever.

PILAF OF BEETROOT, FETA & TURMERIC

This pilaf is based on one I ate at Istanbul's Müzedechanga (which Peter Gordon consults for), though it was more Middle Eastern influenced. Beetroot and turmeric pilafs are made separately, then combined so you have a beautiful yellow and purple mix.

I use half brown basmati rice for extra texture, which you need to soak for an hour before cooking. You can use white instead, but use the same cooking time and stock quantities as for the turmeric pilaf.

This is a great vegetarian dish or is delicious served with sausages such as spicy lamb merguez, or fresh chorizo, hot off the barbecue. It should be served warm, not hot, as the colours will blend together if you combine them while hot.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- ¾ cup brown basmati rice, soaked for 1 hour then drained well
- 1 medium (200g) beetroot, peeled and finely chopped
- 775ml seasoned vegetable or chicken stock, boiling
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ¾ cup white basmati rice
- small bunch flat-leafed parsley, chopped
- 200g feta (not a creamy style), crumbled

Heat 1 tablespoon each of the oil and the butter in a medium heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add half the onion and fry for 5 minutes. Stir in the brown basmati rice and fry for 3 minutes then add the beetroot and 400ml of the stock. Bring to the boil, reduce to the lowest simmer, cover and cook for 25 minutes without disturbing. Remove from the heat and leave to rest, covered, for 5 minutes then uncover to cool for 15 minutes.

While the beetroot pilaf is cooking, start the turmeric pilaf, which takes less cooking time.

Heat the remaining oil and butter in a medium heavy-based frying pan and

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add the remaining onion, the turmeric and the cinnamon. Fry for 5 minutes then stir in the white basmati rice and cook for 3 minutes, stirring. Add the remaining 375ml of hot stock, bring to the boil, reduce to the lowest simmer, cover and cook for 15 minutes without disturbing. Remove from the heat and leave to rest, covered, for 5 minutes then uncover to cool for 15 minutes.

In a large serving dish, carefully fold together the pilafs along with the parsley and feta. Serves 6.

CHEESE TART WITH OATMEAL CRUST

This traditional French style of cheese tart is usually made with gruyère or comté, but it is a great way to capture the unique flavours of other cheeses. I like to use a creamy blue, but other creamy semi-soft cheeses would work well such as taleggio or, for a milder flavour, havarti.

The oatmeal in the pastry gives it a lovely nutty, rustic quality, but it does make the pastry prone to leakage. It is important to cool the baked pastry case before filling to reduce this risk. If you want to be really vigilant, whisk a little egg white (you can steal a little from the filling) and brush this on the warm case to form a seal. Serve with a large green salad.

- 200g flour
- 100g rolled oats
- 125g butter, diced and softened, plus extra for greasing
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon caster sugar
- 225g cream cheese, softened
- 150ml cream
- 4 medium eggs
- 3 tablespoons chopped chives
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- pinch of nutmeg
- 200g creamy blue cheese

On the bench top, mix together the flour and oats then make a well in the centre.

Put the butter, egg, salt and sugar in the well and, with your hands, work them together while slowly starting to incorporate the flour and oats into the mixture along with 2 tablespoons of cold water. Keep working with your hands until all mixed.

Knead the dough lightly, just 2-3 times, until smooth. Form into a disc, wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 1 hour before using.

Butter a 22cm-23cm flan tin. Roll the pastry out to a 26cm round and carefully place in the tin, pressing it into place. Refrigerate to rest for 20 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

Prick the bottom of the pastry base and line with baking paper. Fill with baking beans and bake blind for 25 minutes. Take out of the oven, remove the paper and beans, and place on a rack to cool completely.

Reduce the oven to 190°C.

In a bowl, whisk the cream cheese until smooth then whisk in the cream followed by the eggs, chives, pepper and nutmeg.

Cut or crumble the blue cheese into 1cm cubes and scatter over the pastry base then pour the egg mixture over. Bake for 30-35 minutes until set, risen and golden. Serves 6-8.

MASCARPONE & ALMOND FLAN WITH AMARETTO-POACHED NECTARINES

This flan is dense with mascarpone – a rich cream cheese made from cow's milk – and similar to cheesecake but with no pastry. It is very rich so you only need a small slice. Serve with the amaretto-poached nectarines, or fresh berries or apricots. If you don't like the flavour of almond extract, replace it with vanilla, but it is subtle in this flan. Ideally, start this a day ahead.

- 50g sliced almonds
- 4 eggs, separated
- ½ cup caster sugar
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 25g cornflour
- 500g mascarpone
- 200ml cream
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Place the almonds on a baking tray and bake for 10 minutes until golden. Cool, cover and set aside.

Line a 22cm-24cm pie or flan dish with baking paper (this can be a bit scrunched up around the edges; it gives the flan character).

In a bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until pale. Stir in the almond essence and cornflour.

In a separate bowl, beat the mascarpone until soft then beat in the cream. Combine this with the egg yolk mixture.

Whisk the egg whites with the lemon juice to soft peaks. Carefully fold this into the mascarpone mixture.

Pour into the lined dish and bake for 1 hour. Cool in the dish then refrigerate until firm (at least 6 hours but preferably overnight).

Turn out on to a serving plate.

Combine the toasted almonds with a little of the poaching liquid from the nectarines and scatter on top of the flan. Serve with the amaretto-poached nectarines (recipe follows). Serves 12.

Amaretto-Poached Nectarines

The leftover poaching syrup can be stored in the refrigerator and used for cocktails or poured over cakes.

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split
- ½ cup amaretto
- 12 small nectarines, halved and stones removed

Put the sugar and vanilla bean in a medium saucepan with 1½ cups of water. Bring to the boil and boil for 2 minutes. Add the amaretto and nectarines, and gently simmer for 20 minutes, moving the nectarines around occasionally to ensure they cook evenly. Cool in the liquid. •

Credits: Cutlery, German ceramics, assorted plates, ceramic serving plate, 50s salt and pepper shakers, green-rimmed plates all from Fly by Night; iittala Origo plate and bowl, Riedel O stemless wine glass and serving spoon from The Studio of Tableware; pâtisserie board from Bashford Antiques; table from Lord Ponsonby's Antiques; retro chairs from Mixt art + design. For full details, see Credits Index.

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modern greek

GINNY GRANT ADDS HER TWIST TO UNORTHODOX GREEK DISHES

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MANY YEARS AGO I SPENT A FEW WEEKS SAILING AROUND THE GREEK ISLANDS.

When we ate ashore the food was simple – classic salads of feta, olives and cucumber; tzatziki; slow-roasted lamb (or usually goat) marinated in the thyme that was growing everywhere; delicious gigante beans in tomato sauce; and flavoursome moussaka, all accompanied with the local resinous wine, retsina. The food was simply prepared and allowed the ingredients to shine. That simplicity is reflected in these Greek-style recipes that are short on preparation but big in flavour.

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY GINNY GRANT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON McLEAN / STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

SEARED KINGFISH WITH CRISP SUMMER SALAD
recipe page 108

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EGGPLANT & RED CAPSICUM SALAD WITH TAHINI DRESSING
(top right) recipe page 108

DARK FRIED ZUCCHINI SALAD WITH FETA
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GRILLED LAMB CHOPS WITH BUTTER BEANS & ROASTED CHERRY TOMATOES
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late summer
IS THE BEST TIME FOR MELONS

WATERMELON WITH LABNEH & WALNUT PRALINE
recipe page 109

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SEARED KINGFISH WITH CRISP SUMMER SALAD

I originally intended to use grilled filleted sardines for this dish – one of the most commonly available fish I remember from Greece. However, on the day of the photo shoot the kingfish looked the best. While I'd prefer a more oily fish such as tuna, mackerel, pilchards or swordfish, the firmness of the kingfish works well here. The fish can be prepared ahead and refrigerated, but bring it to room temperature before serving. And dress the salad just before serving.

- grated zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano (preferably Greek or Sicilian)
- pinch of dried chilli flakes
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- olive oil for brushing
- 400g kingfish in one piece, skinned and boned
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 stick celery, strings removed with a peeler and thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 1 small fennel bulb, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 1 tablespoon capers

For the dressing, combine the lemon zest and juice, garlic, oregano, chilli flakes, extra virgin olive oil and salt, and set aside.

Brush the fish lightly with a little olive oil, season with salt and pepper then grill or panfry over high heat for a few minutes on each side – the fish should still be raw in the middle. Place on a dish and pour half the dressing over. Allow to sit for at least 30 minutes before slicing.

Combine the remaining ingredients and mix with the rest of the dressing. To serve, place the salad on plates and top with slices of kingfish. Serves 4 as a starter.

EGGPLANT & RED CAPSICUM SALAD WITH TAHINI DRESSING

Grilling the eggplant and capsicum imparts a smoky dimension to the salad. However, if need be you can roast the vegetables in the oven.

- 1 large eggplant
- 2 red capsicums
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 spring onion, sliced on the diagonal
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

Grill the eggplant and capsicums over a grill, gas burner or fire until the skin is blackened. When cool enough to handle, remove the skin, core the capsicums and chop the vegetables into 2cm dice and place in a bowl.

Mix together the tahini, lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil, combine with the vegetables, and season with salt and pepper to taste. When ready to serve, add the spring onion to the salad and garnish with sesame seeds. Serves 4-6 as a side dish.

DARK FRIED ZUCCHINI SALAD WITH FETA

Here the cooked zucchini is sprinkled with vinegar and herbs and set aside to absorb the flavours, making this salad perfect for doing ahead. While the zucchini loses its crunch if kept overnight, the leftovers still make for delicious eating the next day.

- 600g zucchini, ends trimmed and sliced lengthwise into 5mm-thick slices
- flour for dusting
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- olive oil for frying
- 1 clove garlic, crushed with a little salt to make a paste
- 1 tablespoon chopped dill (if unavailable use mint)
- 1 tablespoon Chardonnay vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 50g goat's feta, crumbled

Dry the zucchini slices in a clean tea towel then dust with flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Heat a little olive oil in a frying pan and fry the zucchini on each side until dark brown. You will need to do this in batches. Place on a serving dish.

Combine the garlic, dill and vinegar then drizzle over the zucchini and leave for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavours to develop. When ready to serve scatter the feta over and season with extra salt and pepper if necessary. Serves 4-6 as a side dish.

GRILLED LAMB CHOPS WITH BUTTER BEANS & ROASTED CHERRY TOMATOES

One of my favourite things to eat while in Greece was the gigante or large butter beans in tomato sauce. Often they were freshly prepared, but on the yacht we had tinned ones – which are far superior to baked beans. Here I have added cherry tomatoes roasted with garlic and olives to the mix. I used mid-loin lamb chops, but lamb leg steaks, fillets or backstraps could be substituted.

- 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped thyme leaves
- grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 12 mid-loin lamb chops, excess fat removed
- 1 cup dried butter or lima beans, soaked overnight (or use 2 x 400g cans butter beans, drained and rinsed)
- 2 punnets (500g) cherry tomatoes
- 1 bulb garlic, cloves separated but skin left on
- ½ cup black olives (I used Kalamata)
- few sprigs thyme
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped herbs such as parsley or chives
- zest and juice of 1 lemon

In a bowl, combine the thyme, lemon zest and juice, and olive oil. Add the lamb and marinate for 1 hour.

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Drain the beans, place in a saucepan with cold water and bring to the boil, removing any scum that rises to the surface, then simmer gently for 1 hour or until tender. Drain again, reserving a little of the cooking liquid. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 160°C. In a roasting dish combine the cherry tomatoes, garlic, olives and thyme. Drizzle the olive oil over, season with salt and pepper, and roast for 40 minutes or until the tomatoes are bursting but not collapsing.

Season the lamb with salt and pepper, and grill for a few minutes on each side for rare to medium-rare. Set aside on a warm plate to rest for a few minutes.

Combine the beans with the cherry tomatoes and add the fresh herbs and lemon zest and juice, adding a little of the bean cooking water if it needs a little moisture.

To serve, place a large spoonful of the beans on each plate, add the lamb and serve with a salad of rocket leaves dressed with olive oil and lemon juice. Serves 6.

GREEK SIMPLICITY IS REFLECTED IN THESE RECIPES THAT ARE SHORT ON PREPARATION BUT big in flavour

WATERMELON WITH LABNEH & WALNUT PRALINE

Late summer is the best time for melons and here they make a light, no-fuss dessert. Labneh can be bought in supermarkets now (the Canaan brand is very good), but it is easy to make by straining thickened plain yoghurt through a sieve overnight to the desired thickness. If fresh figs are available, they would be delicious here instead of the watermelon. Even nicer if they were first panfried in a little olive oil to warm through.

Walnut Praline

- **3 tablespoons sugar**
- **1 tablespoon water**
- **½ cup walnut pieces, toasted**

Heat the sugar and water together in a small saucepan until the sugar dissolves and turns to a dark caramel colour. Add the walnut pieces, stir to coat in the caramel then spread out on a buttered baking tray to cool. Crush or cut into small pieces and set aside.

For the watermelon & labneh

- **100g labneh**
- **2 teaspoons liquid honey (I used rewarewa)**
- **½ watermelon, rind removed then cut into slices**

Mix the labneh and honey together (adding more honey to taste if you like it sweeter). Arrange the watermelon on a platter, place dollops of labneh over the watermelon and scatter the walnut praline over. Serves 6. •

Credits: 250° plates and small bowl, T&C shot glasses and tumblers, and ceramic bird bowl all from Nest; Cutipol cutlery and salad servers from The Studio of Tableware; antique blue glass, blue ceramic bowl and crystal decanter from Bashford Antiques; all other props privately owned. For full details, see Credits Index.

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OPEN HOUSE

KATHY SNOWBALL ENTERTAINS WITH SMARTLY SIMPLE MAINS THAT HIT THE SPOT

There are times when you want to have friends for dinner, but you don't want to do the "dinner party" thing.

Here are some recipes for just such occasions. The ingredients are easy to access, the methods are simple, the food looks smart and, most importantly of all, it tastes delicious. Start by serving a platter of antipasto with a glass of bubbles, then follow it with one of these main courses and finish with some fresh fruit or cheese. Entertaining will never have felt so easy.

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RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY KATHY SNOWBALL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON LOUCAS
STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

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CHICKEN WITH POTATOES & TOMATOES
recipe page 118

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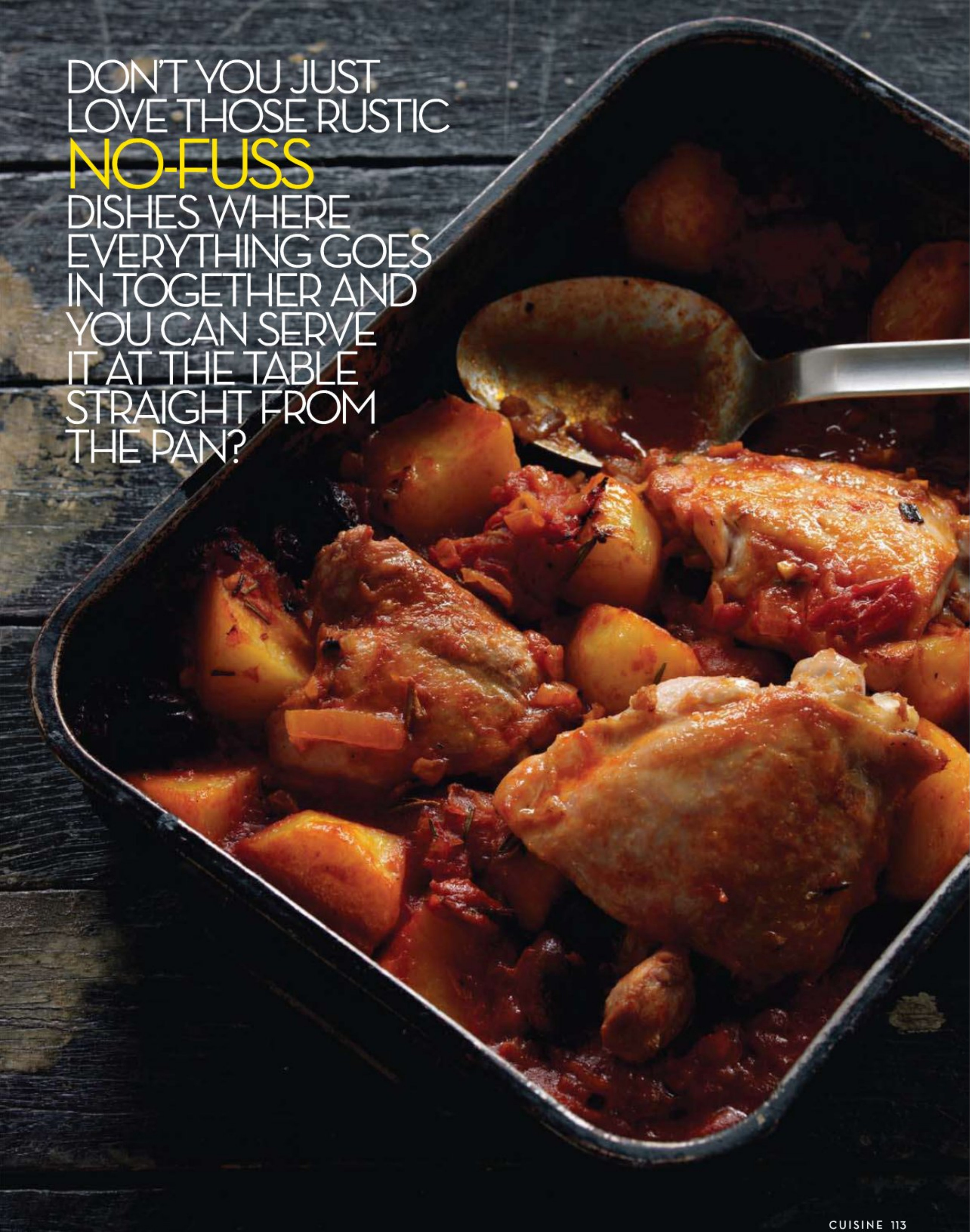
DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THOSE RUSTIC NO-FUSS DISHES WHERE EVERYTHING GOES IN TOGETHER AND YOU CAN SERVE IT AT THE TABLE STRAIGHT FROM THE PAN?



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ASIAN-STYLE ROAST CHICKEN WITH CUCUMBER SALAD & STEAMED GINGER RICE

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ROAST CHICKEN

IS MY FAVOURITE MEAL. I NEVER TIRE OF IT AND, IF I HAD TO CHOOSE, IT WOULD DEFINITELY BE MY "LAST SUPPER"

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KINGFISH WITH LENTILS, BEANS & CARAMELISED ONIONS

Once upon a time caramelised onions went into tarts or on to a steak. Now they have found their way into many different dishes, adding an unexpected richness of flavour.

They work particularly well with fish, especially when teamed with the earthy flavours of lentils.

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for frying and serving
- 3 red onions, sliced
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1 cup Puy-style lentils
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 300g baby green beans, trimmed
- 2 tomatoes, cored and coarsely chopped
- 4 x 180g firm white fish fillets like kingfish or snapper (being in Australia, I used blue eye)

Heat ¼ cup of oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onions covered over very low heat for about 15 minutes until soft. Add the balsamic vinegar and brown sugar, and continue to cook, uncovered and stirring, until caramelised.

Cook the lentils in simmering water for 15-20 minutes until tender. Drain and rinse under cold water. Return the lentils to the pan, stir in half the caramelised onions and the chives, and season to taste.

Cook the beans in simmering salted water for 2-3 minutes until tender. Drain and rinse under cold water.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a pan until hot, add the tomatoes and stir then add the beans, toss together and season to taste.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a non-stick frying pan and fry the fish over high heat for 1 minute each side. Transfer to an oven tray and roast at 200°C for 5 minutes.

Serve the lentil mixture topped with the bean mixture and fish. Spoon the remaining onions over the fish and drizzle with a little extra oil. Serves 4.

CHICKEN WITH POTATOES & TOMATOES

Don't you just love those rustic no-fuss dishes where everything goes in together and you can serve it at the table straight from the pan? That's my kind of food. I have used chicken thigh cutlets here, but you could use breasts or whole legs if you prefer.

- ¼ extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for frying
- 2 onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 80ml dry white wine
- ½ cup chicken stock
- pinch of saffron threads
- 2 x 400g cans peeled tomatoes
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 all-purpose or floury potatoes, peeled, quartered and boiled until tender
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped rosemary leaves
- ⅓ cup black olives
- 4 chicken thigh cutlets
- ⅓ cup pesto

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

Heat ¼ cup of oil in a saucepan, add the onions and fry gently over low heat until soft. Add the garlic, wine, stock, saffron and tomatoes, and boil over high heat for about 10 minutes to reduce then season to taste.

Stir in the potatoes, rosemary and olives then season to taste. Transfer the mixture to a roasting pan.

Heat a little oil in a frying pan and brown the chicken cutlets. Sit the chicken on top of the tomato and potato mixture, and roast in the oven for 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked.

Serve the chicken on a bed of tomato and potato mixture topped with a spoonful of pesto, and with a green salad alongside. Serves 4.

SPAGHETTI WITH PRAWNS, PEAS & LEEKS

I have used spaghetti in this recipe, but you could substitute different types of pasta such as penne or baby orecchiette. Also, served in smaller quantities, it makes a great entrée for one of those evenings you feel like cooking several courses.

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for frying and drizzling
- 2 leeks (white part only), sliced into 1cm rounds
- ⅓ cup chicken stock or water
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas
- 300g dried spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons flat-leafed parsley leaves
- 1 tablespoon chopped dill
- 20 green prawns, peeled and deveined with tails left intact
- 90g feta marinated in oil and herbs
- lemon wedges, to serve

Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the leeks and stock or water, and cook covered over low heat until soft then stir in the lemon juice and season to taste. Remove from the pan and place in a large bowl.

Boil or steam the peas until tender then add to the leeks.

Cook the spaghetti in simmering salted water until tender then drain and add to the leek mixture. Season to taste, add the parsley and dill, and stir to combine.

Heat a little oil in a frying pan and cook the prawns on both sides until golden and cooked through.

Toss the pasta mixture with the prawns and crumbled feta, drizzle with a little more oil and serve with lemon wedges. Serves 4.

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ENTERTAINING WILL NEVER HAVE FELT SO EASY

TUNA KEBABS WITH OLIVE & CAPER SALSA

There are several ways of making skordalia. Some like to make it with potato, but I prefer to use ground almonds – I like the creaminess it adds to the flavour. Serve it with lamb and it is equally delicious.

Tuna is my preferred fish for this dish, but if it's not available you could substitute swordfish.

A tip: you can also serve the olive and caper salsa with lavash (a crisp flatbread) as an appetiser.

Skordalia

- 1 egg yolk
- 60g ground almonds
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 cup light olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

Process the egg yolk, almonds and garlic in a food processor until well combined. Add the lemon juice and process until combined then, with the motor running, add the oil gradually until the mixture is thick then season to taste. Thin with a little cold water if the mixture is too thick. Set aside.

Olive & Caper Salsa

- ¾ cup chopped mixed herbs including flat-leafed parsley, chives, dill and coriander
- ⅓ cup pitted black olives, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons capers, drained and chopped
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

Combine all the ingredients and season to taste. Set aside.

Tuna Kebabs

- 700g tuna, cut into 2cm chunks
- 1 lemon, sliced then the slices quartered
- extra virgin olive oil for brushing
- 2 vine-ripened tomatoes, halved and sliced
- 2 cups wild rocket

Soak 4 bamboo skewers in water for 1 hour.

Thread the tuna on to the skewers, placing a piece of lemon between each chunk. Brush the tuna with oil and barbecue or chargrill over high heat for 1-2 minutes each side, depending on the thickness.

Spoon the skordalia on to plates, top with tomato slices, some rocket and a tuna kebab, and spoon the salsa over or serve on the side. I like to serve these with olive bread. Serves 4.

ASIAN-STYLE ROAST CHICKEN WITH CUCUMBER SALAD & STEAMED GINGER RICE

Roast chicken is my favourite meal. I never tire of it and, if I had to choose, it would definitely be my "last supper". I love the aroma that fills the kitchen when it's cooking and the fact it's so simple. In this version I have moved away from conventional flavours and given it an Asian bent.

For the chicken

- 1.8kg free-range chicken
- 1 teaspoon five-spice powder
- 1 lemon
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large red chilli, seeded and finely chopped
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 2 tablespoons light olive oil

Place the chicken in a large bowl and rub the five-spice powder all over. Squeeze the juice from the lemon and place the lemon halves in the chicken cavity. Whisk together the lemon juice, garlic, chilli, soy sauce, honey and oil, and rub all over the chicken. Set aside for 30 minutes.

Place the chicken in a roasting pan and pour the marinade left in the bowl over. Add water to the pan to a depth of 2cm and roast at 200°C for 1 hour and 10 minutes, basting twice. Remove from the pan and rest loosely covered with tinfoil for 10 minutes and set aside the pan with the juices.

Steamed Ginger Rice

- 2 tablespoons light olive oil
- 4 spring onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1½ cups basmati rice

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and fry the spring onions, ginger and garlic over low heat for 2 minutes or until soft. Add the rice and stir to combine then add 2¼ cups of water and bring to the boil. Cover and cook over very low heat for 10 minutes until the water is absorbed and the rice is cooked. Stand covered for 10 minutes then fluff up with a fork.

Cucumber Salad

- 1 carrot, peeled and cut into julienne
- 100g snow peas, cut into julienne
- 2 Lebanese cucumbers, peeled, seeded and cut into julienne
- ¼ cup coriander leaves
- ¼ cup mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons light olive oil

Just before serving, place the carrot and snow peas in a heatproof bowl. Pour boiling water over and let stand for 1 minute. Drain and rinse under cold water. Mix with the remaining ingredients, toss gently and season.

To serve

Reheat the pan juices and cut the chicken into serving portions. Serve drizzled with pan juices and with the salad and rice alongside. Serves 4. •

Credits: All props privately owned.

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QUICK & SMART

MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE DISHES ARE THE IDEAL CHOICE FOR THIS SEASON'S PRODUCE, SAYS RAY McVINNIE

Eggplants may have originated in India and zucchini, capsicums and tomatoes may have come from the Americas, but along with fennel and olives they are essential to the best in Mediterranean vegetable cookery. Great dishes such as the ratatouille of France or the ratatuja of northern Italy are superb examples of these vegetables stewed with that other great Mediterranean ingredient, olive oil. Luckily, in New Zealand we produce all of these ingredients and this time of year is the best time to enjoy them.

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✱ So often ruined by bad café cooks, a well-made frittata always pleases. Take this humble dish to a new level as the first course of a special dinner. Slow-fry **mushrooms, zucchini, onions** and **red capsicums** with lots of **garlic, smoked Spanish paprika**, chopped **bacon** and a little **chilli** until everything is soft. Remove from the pan to a bowl, cool a little, stir in lots of **scallops** or raw peeled **prawns** or both and plenty of lightly beaten **eggs**. Mix well. Heat **olive oil** in a clean pan, pour in the egg mix and when it starts to bubble, place in a 200°C oven until well set, puffed up and browned. Serve warm in wedges with a dollop of **aïoli** and **rocket leaves**.

✱ Fry diced **eggplant** in **olive oil** until well browned. Place in a bowl and mix with crumbled **feta,** diced roasted **kumara**, finely diced **preserved lemon peel**, chopped **mint leaves** and finely chopped **garlic**. Form the mixture into small spring roll-shaped **filo** parcels, brush with **olive oil** and bake until well browned and crisp in a hot oven. Serve with drinks or as an accompaniment to barbecued **lamb** or **chicken**. Spicy **chutney** and plain **unsweetened yoghurt** on the side.

✱ Put some ripe **tomatoes** on a bed of **rosemary**, **thyme** and chopped **garlic**, drizzle with **olive oil** and season well with flaky **sea salt** and freshly ground **black pepper**. Roast in a 200°C oven for about 10 minutes until the tomatoes are bursting but not collapsing. Set aside, discarding the herbs. On a hot barbecue, toast slices of traditionally made **sourdough** until almost burnt but not charred. Rub each slice with a cut clove of **garlic** and drizzle well with **extra virgin olive oil**. You now have bruschetta. Drain a can of large **butter beans** and mash coarsely then smear on to the bread, top with **tuna** slices that have been rubbed with **garlic, chilli** and **olive oil** and barbecued until medium rare. Place a roasted **tomato** on top and serve with warm **green beans** topped with fried **bacon**, the grease from the pan and a big splash of **balsamic**.

✱ Line a shallow ovenproof dish with sliced **sourdough** brushed with **olive oil**, sprinkle in some chopped **garlic**, flaked

✱ Make a vegetable gratin by slow-frying chopped onions, fennel, eggplant, zucchini, preserved lemon peel and garlic in olive oil until everything is soft and lightly browned. Flame with a big splash of Pernod then pour everything into a shallow ovenproof dish and spread the mixture out. Pour in enough cream to just cover and sprinkle with anchovy fillets, black olives and lots of freshly grated parmesan. Place under the grill until golden and bubbling. Serve sprinkled with fennel leaves and toasted sourdough that has been rubbed with a cut clove of garlic, had halved ripe tomatoes squashed on top and drizzled with extra virgin olive oil.

hot-smoked salmon, lots of halved **cherry tomatoes**, pitted **Kalamata olives** and finely chopped **red onion**. Break plenty of **free-range eggs** on top, sprinkle with crumbled **feta** and a little **Kaitaia Fire Chilli Pepper Sauce** and bake until the egg whites are set, but the yolks are still slightly runny. Serve with a crunchy **green salad**.

✱ Cut off the ends of **zucchini**, place in an ovenproof dish, toss with **olive oil**, finely chopped **garlic, wild oregano, salt** and freshly ground **black pepper**. Roast in a 200°C oven for 20 minutes or until tender. Meanwhile, fill an ovenproof dish with **cherry tomatoes**, chopped **prosciutto** or **bacon**, a clove of finely chopped **garlic**, a little **olive oil** and **chilli flakes**. Bake for 15 minutes until bubbling. Serve the zucchini and tomatoes on al dente Italian **spaghetti** with **basil** leaves, **lemon zest** and freshly grated **parmesan**. >

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ROASTED FISH WITH TOMATOES, ZUCCHINI, PANCETTA & GREEN OLIVES

Here the fish is simply rubbed with oil and flavourings, roasted in a hot oven then served with a quickly made pan sauce of barely cooked fresh tomatoes.

A thick piece of John Dory, which is what I used here, a fillet of bluenose, hapuku or monkfish or a whole gutted gurnard or snapper would all work well here, as would a slab of tuna, but cook the tuna only until it is medium rare as it will taste better like this.

- 800g skinned and boned firm white fish fillets like John Dory, bluenose, hapuku, monkfish, snapper, gurnard or tarakihi
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon very finely chopped rosemary
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 100g skinned pancetta, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 zucchini, diced 1cm
- 1 cup green olives
- 6 tomatoes, cored, halved and each half cut into 4 wedges
- 50ml dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon butter
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup flat-leafed parsley sprigs

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Put the fish fillets side by side in a roasting pan and rub 3 tablespoons of the olive oil, the rosemary and pepper all over the fish.

Place in the oven for 10 minutes or until just cooked through (insert a small knife into the middle of the thickest fillet, which should just flake open so you can have a look inside to see the degree of cooking).

Meanwhile, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a frying pan over moderate heat. Add the pancetta and garlic, and gently panfry for about 5 minutes until the fat melts in the pancetta. Add the zucchini and olives, and quickly panfry until the zucchini is lightly browned.

Turn the heat up and add the tomatoes and wine. Mix well and cook rapidly for about 2 minutes until the tomatoes are hot but not collapsing. Add the butter, season well and add the parsley. Mix well over high heat then remove. Place the fish on a warm serving platter, pour the sauce over the top and break the fish up with a spoon as you serve. Good with steamed rice. Serves 6.

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✱ Panfry lots of sliced **zucchini**, diced **eggplant**, **garlic**, **black olives** and **chilli flakes** in **olive oil** until the vegetables are browned and tender. Stir in chopped **anchovies**, **baby spinach** and **rocket leaves** so they wilt. Serve under well-seasoned whole gutted **gurnard** which have been brushed with **olive oil** and roasted in a 200°C oven until cooked through and browned. Lots of **lemon wedges** on the side.

✱ Peel and chop lots of ripe **tomatoes**, and place in a deep saucepan with chopped **garlic**, chopped **spring onions**, sliced raw pure **pork sausage**, **black olives** and plenty of well-scrubbed live **mussels**. Cover and place over high heat until the mussels start to open, removing them as they do. Place in a warm serving bowl. Taste the remaining tomato mixture and season (it will be salty so be careful). Pour this over the mussels, sprinkle with lots of fresh **basil** and serve with **crusty bread** to mop up the sauce.

✱ Panfry lots of diced **eggplant** in **olive oil** until soft and well browned. Remove from the pan and reserve. Add lots of chopped **onions**, **garlic**, a **cinnamon stick** and the **zest** of a **lemon**. Slow-fry for 15 minutes until the onions are soft. Add the fried **eggplant**, several tablespoons of **tomato paste**, a can of crushed **Italian tomatoes** and some halved stoned fresh **dates** to sweeten the mix. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes or until thick and sticky. Taste and season. Serve with garlicky barbecued **lamb racks** or **roast lamb** and gravy with **rice** or **orzo** on the side and a big well-dressed **green salad** with **mint** and **fennel** in it to follow.

✱ Soak some **dried apricots** in hot water for 20 minutes then drain well and slice thinly. Place in a bowl with plenty of sliced **spring onions**, chopped **mint**, a little finely grated **orange zest**, lots of crumbled **goat's feta** or **chèvre** and a finely diced **tomato**. Dress with **lemon juice** and **extra virgin olive oil**, taste and season well. Serve on thinly sliced **eggplant**, **zucchini**, **pumpkin**, **kumara**, **carrots** and/or roasted **capsicums** with steamed **basmati rice** as a warm rice salad on its own or as an accompaniment to **roast chicken** or panfried **tiger prawns**.

✱ Boil plenty of small new **potatoes** or chunked peeled **Agrias** until tender and toss while hot with finely diced **preserved lemon peel**, chopped **parsley**, **tarragon** and **chervil**, roasted chopped **hazelnuts**, **watercress sprigs**, **white wine vinegar** and **extra virgin olive oil**. Season well and serve with panfried **fish fillets** that have been flambéd with a little **Pernod** and with **lemon juice** and **butter** added to the pan at the last minute.

✱ Boil some **pearl barley** until tender, drain well and dress with plenty of **extra virgin olive oil**, a little **orange juice** and plenty of **lemon juice**. Stir in orange and lemon zests, thinly sliced peeled **peaches** or **plums**, panfried diced **eggplant**, paper-thin sliced **fennel bulb** and chopped **mint**. Serve with barbecued **chicken thighs** that have been rubbed with **olive oil**, **garlic** and **pepper**.

✱ Make a Moroccan-style dressing with **extra virgin olive oil**, toasted **cumin seeds**, a little finely chopped **garlic**, **chilli** and **preserved lemon peel**, lots of chopped **flat-leafed parsley** and **coriander**, **lemon juice**, **salt** and **pepper**. Use this to dress boiled new **potatoes**, thickly sliced **eggplant** and **zucchini** slices that have been brushed with **olive oil** and barbecued, and barbecued **chicken** or **lamb** or simply over thickly sliced ripe **tomatoes** with hot **couscous** or **rice**.

✱ Core and chop lots of ripe **tomatoes**, heat a frying pan with a little **olive oil** and add chopped **chilli** and **garlic**, fry for 20 seconds then add the tomatoes and plenty of raw peeled **prawns**. Fry until the prawns have just cooked and the tomatoes have collapsed. Taste, season and serve on al dente **orzo** with plenty of crumbled **feta** on top.

✱ To make a quick spicy tomato sauce, toss cored **tomatoes** in **olive oil**, finely chopped **garlic** and **chilli flakes**, roast in a hot oven until collapsing then skin, mash and season with **salt**, **pepper** and a little **sherry vinegar**. Dip thin slices of **eggplant** in a batter of **flour**, beaten **egg** and **milk** with plenty of toasted **cumin seeds** and fry in hot **olive oil** until well browned, removing and draining on paper towels as you go. Serve with flaked **smoked fish** and the tomato sauce as a first course or as a main with **rice** and **salad**.

>

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Cinnamon Chicken with Tomato & Fig Salad

✱ Place chopped **eggplant**, **tomatoes**, **zucchini** and **red capsicums** in a deep ovenproof dish. Toss with **olive oil** and **garlic**, cover and bake for 1 hour until everything is very soft. Purée in a food processor then stir in plenty of toasted **sesame seeds**, finely grated **lemon zest** and **juice**, and chopped **parsley** and **dill.** Spread on a platter and sprinkle with more toasted **sesame seeds**, a dribble of **sesame oil**, diced and cored **tomatoes**, and chopped **dill** and **parsley**. Serve with crunchy **sourdough** toast for dipping with drinks.

✱ Roll out some **flaky pastry** into a large oval. Turn the edge up all around the oval to make the border. Place on a baking sheet and cover with chunks of well-drained canned **tuna** in **olive oil**, sliced **tomatoes**, thinly sliced **zucchini**, **black olives**, **capers**, a sprinkle of **chilli flakes**, a few **cumin seeds**, **salt** and **pepper**. Bake in a 200°C oven for about 20 minutes until well cooked. Remove from the oven and serve drizzled with plain **unsweetened yoghurt**, a squeeze of **lemon juice** and chopped **coriander**.

✱ Slow-fry lots of chopped **onions**, finely chopped **ginger**, **lime zest**, **green olives** and chopped **coriander** for about 15 minutes until the onions are soft. Add lots of chopped cored **tomatoes** and fry for 5 minutes until the tomatoes collapse. Place **fish fillets** on top, drizzle with **extra virgin olive oil** and place in the oven for 15 minutes, basting the fish with the tomato mixture occasionally. Remove from the oven and serve with **lime wedges** for squeezing and crunchy **breadcrumbs** fried in **olive oil**.

CINNAMON CHICKEN WITH TOMATO & FIG SALAD

In Spain they make a summer soup with figs and tomatoes – a flavour combination I like. Here I have used the sweet-savoury idea of that dish in a rather simple spiced chicken salad. Free-range chicken breast is rubbed with cinnamon, garlic and olive oil, panfried and finished in the oven, or slow barbecued, then served with a salad of sliced sundried tomatoes, dried figs, fresh tomatoes, rocket, extra virgin olive oil and best-quality balsamic vinegar drizzled on top.

- **8 skinned and boned free-range chicken thighs (about 700g)**
- **1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **2 cloves garlic, crushed**
- **3 tablespoons olive oil**
- **3 handfuls rocket leaves (use wild rocket if you can get it as it has lots of peppery flavour)**
- **8 dried Turkish figs, stalks removed and thinly sliced**
- **6 sundried tomatoes in oil, drained and thinly sliced**
- **6 ripe tomatoes, cored, peeled, halved, seeded and sliced 2cm thick**
- **salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **extra virgin olive oil and best-quality balsamic vinegar for serving**

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Place the chicken in a bowl and add the cinnamon, garlic and olive oil. Mix well. Barbecue the chicken over a moderate heat for about 10 minutes each side, or panfry until well browned then place in the oven for 10 minutes until cooked through. Remove from the oven and rest.

Place the rocket on a big serving platter. Slice the chicken across the grain and pile on top. Sprinkle the figs, sundried tomatoes and tomatoes over. Season everything with salt and pepper. Drizzle plenty of extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar over everything and serve with crusty sourdough bread. Serves 6. ●

Credits: Rosenthal Moon White pasta plate and Tac plate from The Studio of Tableware. For full details, see Credits Index.

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COURSE you can do it©

JO PEARSON PREPARES A SIMPLE YET IMPRESSIVE THREE-COURSE DINNER FOR SIX

shopping

GROCERIES • currants • chèvre (creamy goat's cheese) • aged balsamic vinegar • hazelnut oil • frozen broad beans • cream • butter • brown sugar • pistachios • oats • honey • ground cardamom • orange gelato

FISH • Skin-on snapper

ALCOHOL • Dry sherry

FRESH PRODUCE • beetroot • red and brown onions • flat-leafed parsley • thyme • basil • chervil • cress • zucchini • lemons • lime • oranges • rhubarb

wine match

STARTER A medium citrusy Riesling

MAIN A light-style Chardonnay

DESSERT A Muscat Beaumes de Venise

STARTER

MARINATED BEETROOT & SOFT HERB SALAD WITH CHÈVRE & HAZELNUT VINAIGRETTE

- 5 medium beetroot, shredded
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 2-3 tablespoons currants
- 6 tablespoons best-quality balsamic vinegar
- 4 tablespoons hazelnut oil
- 1½ teaspoons brown sugar
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup soft herbs (like basil, flat-leafed parsley and chervil)
- cress leaves to serve
- 180g chèvre (creamy goat's cheese)

In a bowl, combine the beetroot, onion and currants.

Mix together the vinegar, oil and sugar, season with salt and pepper, and pour over the beetroot mix. Leave to stand for 30 minutes.

Toss the herbs through the beetroot. Arrange cress leaves on the plates, top with the beetroot mix and scatter chunks of the cheese over the top.

MAIN

SKIN-ON SNAPPER WITH BROAD BEAN CRUSH & CITRUS BUTTERED ZUCCHINI

- 6 x 160g-180g portions boned skin-on snapper
- 1 small onion, diced
- canola or rice bran oil for frying
- 500g frozen broad beans, blanched then peeled
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry
- 100ml cream
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 medium zucchini, sliced into ribbons
- 2 teaspoons chopped thyme
- 4 tablespoons butter
- zest and juice of 2 lemons and 1 lime
- 2 teaspoons chopped flat-leafed parsley

Rinse the snapper portions, pat dry and set aside.

For the broad bean crush, sauté the onion in a little oil until soft, place in a food processer with the broad beans, sherry and cream, and season well. Pulse just to a coarse texture.

In a lightly oiled hot frying pan, fry the snapper skin side down first until crisp and golden then flip and cook until the flesh is just opaque. Remove from the pan and allow to rest for 2-3 minutes.

In the same pan, sauté the zucchini and thyme in the butter until soft but still firm. Add the lemon and lime zest and juice, the parsley and season well.

DESSERT

POACHED RHUBARB, PISTACHIO CRUMBLE & ORANGE GELATO

- 700g rhubarb, cut into 10cm lengths
- zest and juice of 4 oranges
- 4 tablespoons honey
- ¾ cup pistachio nuts
- ½ cup jumbo oats
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1½ teaspoons ground cardamom
- 100g butter
- orange gelato or similar to serve

Combine the rhubarb, orange zest and juice, and honey. Spread in a roasting dish, cover with tinfoil and bake at 160°C until soft (about 20 minutes). Set aside.

In a food processer combine all the remaining ingredients and pulse. Spread on to a baking tray and bake at 150°C, stirring frequently, until golden. Divide the rhubarb into bowls, top with the crumble mixture and serve with bought orange gelato. •

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT

Credits: Cutipol Ebony cutlery, Rosenthal Moon entrée plate, service plate and bowl all from The Studio of Tableware. For full details, see Credits Index.

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tips

- Substitute chèvre with a cow's milk cheese if preferred; grilled haloumi or feta would also be great alternatives.
- Any seasonal fruit can replace the rhubarb.
- The beetroot salad is a good accompaniment to grilled lamb to create a main dish.
- When in season, fresh spring peas make a great substitute for broad beans in the crush.
- Make sure the pan is very hot before cooking the skin side of the snapper so it turns golden and crisp.

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TAHINI

The ground paste of sesame seeds, tahini looks like a very smooth peanut butter and has a nutty flavour with slight bitter notes. It is the basis of many Middle Eastern dishes and essential for hummus and baba ghanoush.

Tahini is made from hulled seeds or unhulled (tahini from unhulled seeds is usually darker, more bitter and the strength of flavour can be a bit overpowering – if using it, use less). The oil in tahini can separate out so be sure to incorporate it by mixing before using. Once opened, store tahini in the refrigerator.

The Chinese and Japanese also use sesame seed pastes in their cuisines, but don't use these in Middle Eastern dishes as they are made from roasted sesame seeds and are darker and stronger flavoured.

Commonly, tahini is used for savoury dishes, although a notable exception is halva confectionery, for which it is a primary ingredient. It is also delicious mixed with thick Greek yoghurt and runny honey atop breakfast muesli.

Tahini is often used as a dressing or sauce for fish, meats and vegetables. In its simplest form (the eastern Mediterranean tarator) a few tablespoons of tahini are mixed with lemon juice and salt. As lemon juice often thickens the tahini, loosen it by adding a little water. Other additions can include mashed garlic, spices such as cumin and paprika, yoghurt or olive oil (for a creamy dressing) as well as herbs such as parsley.

- Use the dressing over a chickpea and pumpkin salad. Roast cubed pumpkin with cumin and garlic and mix with cooked chickpeas, finely sliced red onion, shredded mint and parsley. Serve with silverbeet stems braised with garlic and chilli.

- Try Yotam Ottolenghi's green tahini sauce for grilled fish and meats or roasted vegetables: 150ml each of tahini and water with 80ml lemon juice, 2 cloves crushed garlic, ½ teaspoon salt and plenty of chopped parsley. The ingredients are processed until smooth – you may need to add extra water if the mix is too thick.

- Tahini can also be used in baked dishes such as meatballs with tarator or this Lebanese fish favourite. Brown thick fish fillets, then top with thinly sliced onion and tarator dressing made with the addition of mashed garlic and cumin. Bake until the fish is cooked through and serve with a parsley salad and saffron rice. •

GINNY GRANT

TAHINI IS THE BASIS OF MANY MIDDLE EASTERN DISHES AND ESSENTIAL FOR HUMMUS AND BABA GHANOUSH

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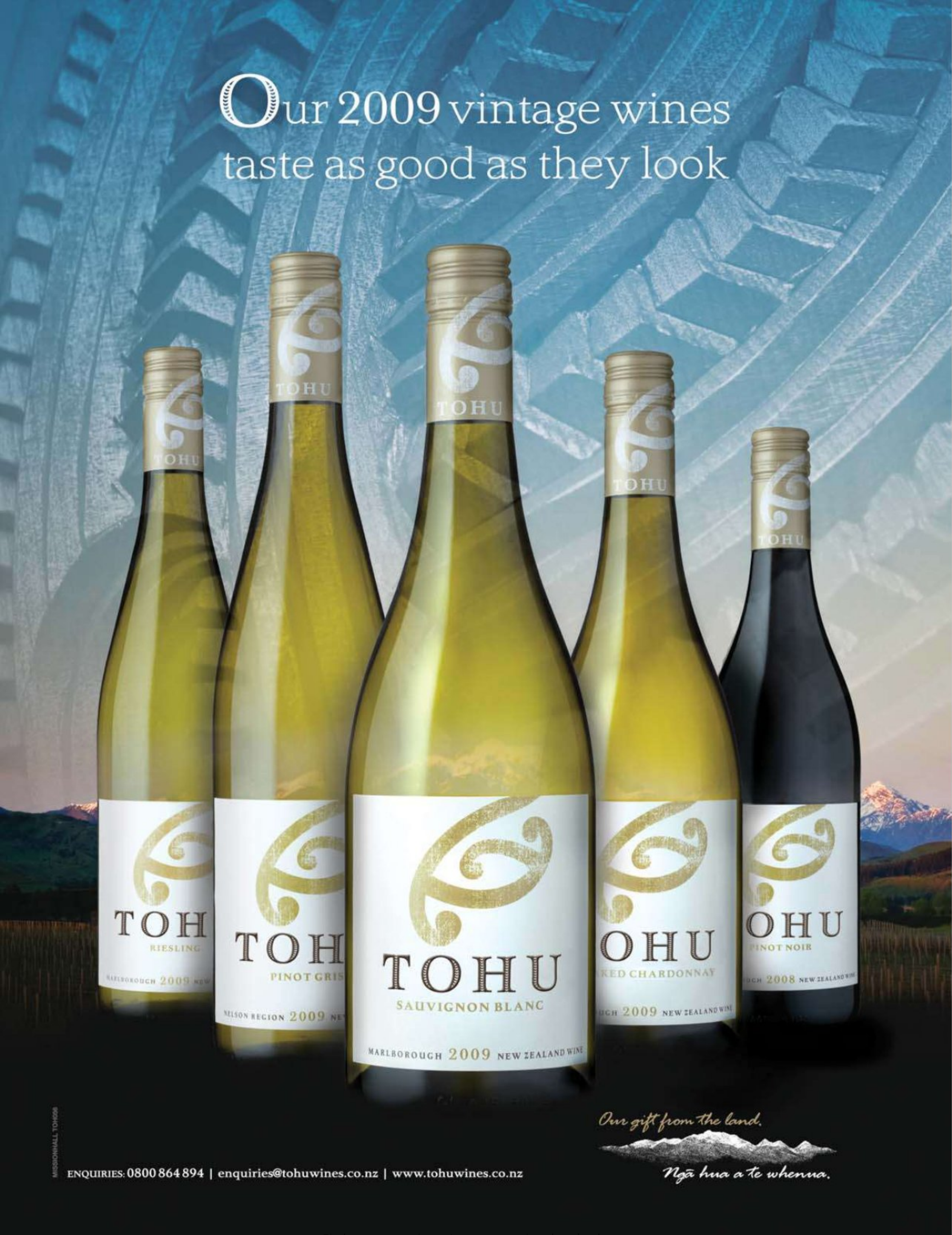

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Edited by Susan Buchanan

SCENTS *of harmony*

NEW ZEALAND'S LATEST AROMATIC WHITE WINE COMPOSITIONS PROVIDE SOME PLEASING HIGH NOTES, REPORTS JOHN SAKER

IF SMELL WERE SOUND, New Zealand's aromatic white wines would be a finely plucked chord on a concert harp, each note alive with purity and contributing to a resonant whole. Our aromatic tasting rounded up the usual players – Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewürztraminer – with a small coda of other whites. The top wines were a source of pleasure for the panel, particularly in the case of Riesling, which saw 17 wines awarded four stars or more. The tasting offered firm evidence that New Zealand's best aromatics are bel canto expressions of these classical varieties.

AARON McLEAN

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pinot gris

This year 144 wines were submitted to our Pinot Gris tasting, a total emblematic of the varietal's overnight sensation status. Just finding its feet a decade ago, Pinot Gris is now a wine beloved by the café set, from Ponsonby Rd to the Octagon.

The suddenness of this elevation has brought with it quality issues. "Everyone suddenly wants to make one, so the experience is not there," noted Anna Flowerday. "Getting the balance right in the vineyard is important, especially as Pinot Gris wants to throw out massive crops – walls of fruit!"

From a solid wall of wines, the panel recognised just two with 5 stars, three with 4½ and nine with 4.

top 5

NZ PINOT GRIS

1. ★★★★★ TI POINT PINOT GRIS 2009 $18-$20
2. ★★★★★ LAMONT PINOT GRIS 2009 $26-$30
3. ★★★★½ RIVER FARM GODFREY ROAD PINOT GRIS 2009 $19.90
4. ★★★★½ OHAU GRAVELS PINOT GRIS 2009 $20.95-$22.95
5. ★★★★½ DAWN GHOST CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT GRIS 2009 $19

BEST BUYS

NZ PINOT GRIS

★★★★★ TI POINT PINOT GRIS 2009 $18-$20

★★★★½ DAWN GHOST CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT GRIS 2009 $19

★★★★ OMAKA SPRINGS ESTATES PINOT GRIS 2009 $18-$19

★★★★ STOP BANKS PINOT GRIS 2009 $18-$19

KEN DOWNIE

TASTING RESULTS

NZ PINOT GRIS

5 STARS OUTSTANDING	2
4½ STARS EXCELLENT	3
4 STARS VERY GOOD	9
3 STARS GOOD	26
NO AWARD	104
TOTAL	**144**

dry measures

All aromatics in our tastings, not just Riesling, now have indications of where they sit on the scale of dry to medium and are tasted in flights with others sitting in the same scale category. In the past, the scaling was done solely using the wines' residual sugar content, but this year we've asked the winemakers themselves to classify their wines. "The winemaker crafts a wine into a desired style of sweetness using the balance of a range of components including acid, sugar, extract and alcohol," said panel chair John Belsham. "So we're respecting the winemaker's judgement rather than using a less-than-reliable prescriptive measure such as residual sugar."

TASTING PANEL

Facing the music with John Belsham, *Cuisine*'s regular tasting panel chair and owner of Foxes Island Wines, were an aromatically well-attuned pair of judges. New Zealand's only master sommelier, Cameron Douglas, filled one seat. Anna Flowerday, winemaker and co-proprietor of Marlborough winery Te Whare Ra, took the other. Although raised in South Australia's famous red wine district McLaren Vale, the call of cool-climate aromatics brought Anna to New Zealand. The associate judge was Jane Boyle, product strategy manager at New Zealand Wine Cellars.

BOTTLE PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON CREAGHAN, FAIRFAX STUDIOS

FOOD MATCHES

Partnering Pinot Gris

Pinot Gris matches many light foods beautifully. Try these dishes from this issue.

- Spaghetti with Prawns, Peas & Leeks (page 118) **Lamont Pinot Gris 2009**
- A vegetable gratin of the type in Quick Smart (page 121) **Ohau Gravels Pinot Gris 2009**
- Sichuan-Style Minced Beef & Tofu with Chinese Greens (page 78) **Waimea Bolitho SV Nelson Pinot Gris 2009**

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NEW ZEALAND
pinot gris

BEST BUY

1 Top Wine

★★★★★

TI POINT PINOT GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $18-$20
1-3 **DRY**

The important role of texture in Pinot Gris is beautifully illustrated in this weighty, enticing wine. There is a creamy purity to the mouthfeel, against which the variety's signature pear and spice flavours put in strong appearances, along with dabs of stone fruit, ginger and lanolin. It is dry, but warm and generous. "Seamless," said Anna Flowerday. Cameron Douglas had fun musing over food matches, finally settling on seared tuna with a soy mirin dressing.

THE TI POINT PLAN

MICHAEL MOLONEY

Tracy Haslam (left) had a vision: to go back to where she grew up near Leigh, north of Matakana, and quietly make handcrafted single-vineyard Bordeaux reds with the help of her mother and grandmother. The wine would direct-sell with ease "and I would be famous", she laughs.

"It was a little delusional."

She's being hard on herself. Ti Point has established itself as a quality brand with a respected flagship red, Ti Point One. Her female forebears have indeed toiled alongside her in the vineyard. Things just became a little less orderly when commercial reality and offspring started making their various presences felt.

Tracy has always based herself in Hawke's Bay, where she lives with her husband, David Mason, managing director of Sacred Hill. Several years ago, after their second child was born, Tracy decided to make Ti Point more viable by expanding the portfolio to include varietals made from grower fruit from elsewhere in the country.

Tracy now has four children, all under eight, and a manager to help look after the Leigh vineyard. She visits her mum and nan there several times a year, as she does the other sites that supply fruit, from Gisborne to Marlborough.

The Ti Point Pinot Gris 2009 is just the second she has made. "The fruit we got from the Awatere Valley in 2009 was gorgeous. But expect something different with our Pinot Gris in the future… I'll be experimenting."

5

2 ★★★★★ **LAMONT PINOT GRIS 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $26-$30** 1-3 **DRY**

This Bendigo producer, author of last year's top Pinot Gris, continues its run of excellence. Fresh nashi pear and floral scents point the way to a gorgeously juicy and quite complex mouthful. "Crafted with integrity," noted John Belsham. "It hasn't achieved flavour through artifice."

4½

3 ★★★★½ **RIVER FARM GODFREY ROAD PINOT GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $19.90** 1-3 **DRY**

"It's a brunette – a lot of the other Pinot Gris are a bit blonde," said Anna Flowerday. Made by the experienced Brian Bicknell, this is a singular – even controversial – drop. Its fruit is wrapped in fascinating, funky, herbal minerality and the texture is beautifully wrought. The perfect match for Thai prawns, seasoned with chilli and coriander.

DEW DROP

JIM TANNOCK

For a new player, River Farm is anything but green. Owner and managing director, David Dew (right), arrived in Marlborough to practise law shortly before the region's vines began their takeover. He was among Marlborough's first independent grape growers and also worked closely with the industry in a legal capacity. He already owned several vineyards when he bought Kathy Lynskey's site on Godfrey's Rd in 2008 and made the decision (with encouragement from friend Brian Bicknell) to create his own wine label. Bicknell makes River Farm's wine, but Dew is no absentee gentleman farmer. He is hands-on in the vineyard and knows exactly what he wants to produce – "interesting, textural wines that go well with food".

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★★★★ HAWKSHEAD PINOT GRIS 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $25-$29 🍷-2 DRY
This is Pinot Gris in a major key – bright, happy, positive. Herbaceous flavours frolic alongside ripe pear and nectarine notes, while the acids are crisp and in balance. Spread the happiness by serving it with an Asian pork and ginger dish.

★★★★ OLSSENS TOM LOGAN PINOT GRIS 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $28 🍷-2 MEDIUM
No varietal shyness here: this Bannockburn wine shouts Pinot Gris. Lovely nashi pear, spice and slightly honeyed notes bathe the taste buds, and a caressing texture gives the impression it's in no great rush. A wine to enjoy with company, alongside anchovy bruschetta.

4 ★★★★½ OHAU GRAVELS PINOT GRIS 2009 (OHAU) $20.95-$22.95 🍷-3 MED/DRY
The only North Islander among our top wines is the progeny of not only a brand-new producer, but a brand-new region. The pride of Ohau (see "West Side Glory") is a light-stepping, ripe wine, packed with guava, quince and fig flavours. It exudes an endearing "drink me now" deliciousness.

5 ★★★★½ DAWN GHOST CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT GRIS 2009 $19 🍷-3 DRY BEST BUY
Support for this Alexandra wine's flinty drive and presence increased over the tasting. It is concentrated, finely textured and minerally, with a finish that doesn't know when to stop. A risotto studded with clams and mussels would be a star match.

★★★★ OMAKA SPRINGS ESTATES PINOT GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $18-$19 🍷-2 MED/DRY BEST BUY
"Lovely bones," noted John Belsham. He wasn't scanning the movie pages, just enjoying this wine's fine lines, structure and length. Funky flinty notes temper its richness. The style lends itself to a variety of foods, with creamy blue cheese near the top of the list.

★★★★ SAINT CLAIR GODFREY'S CREEK RESERVE PINOT GRIS 2008 (MARLBOROUGH) $22.95-$24.95 🍷-2 DRY
Winemaker Matt Thomson's steady hand on the tiller steers a course between spicy apple strudel and taut, savoury flintiness. A touch of alcohol heat doesn't detract from the overall package, which is complex, supple in texture and would work nicely with a Thai green curry.

WEST SIDE GLORY

Eschewing the prevailing wisdom that vines prefer the eastern side of both islands, experienced viticulturist Kate Gibbs (far right) advised a small group of Kapiti businessmen to plant grapes in Ohau, between Otaki and Levin, north of the Kapiti Coast. Any pre-game nerves dissipated after the release of Ohau Gravels' inaugural (2009) Pinot Gris. It began collecting awards around the country, including a fourth-place finish (4½ stars) in *Cuisine*'s tasting. The wines are made by another woman of wine, Jane Cooper (far left). "The vibrancy of the fruit flavours is pretty amazing," says Cooper. "I think the extended growing season is a big factor – last year we harvested here two weeks after the Wairarapa."

JON MORGAN / DOMINION POST

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★★★★ SPY VALLEY PINOT GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $19.90-$22.90 -2 MED/DRY
An overt honey-puff scent signals the rich, interesting taste experience that is in store. Botrytis (noble rot) makes a strong contribution to this toasty, apricot-flavoured, focused wine. The inviting softness and warmth conjure thoughts of colder evenings and classic French onion soup.

★★★★ STOP BANKS PINOT GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $18-$19 -3 DRY

BEST BUY

Stop banks are flood protectors, but tip the glass and there's no stopping this wine's gorgeous flood of apple, pear and spice, carried by a crisp acidity. "A tight, sincere style," thought the judges. Another thought: try it with goat's cheese and caramelised onion tart.

THE VIBRANCY OF THE FRUIT FLAVOURS IS PRETTY AMAZING. THE EXTENDED GROWING SEASON IS A BIG FACTOR - LAST YEAR WE HARVESTED HERE TWO WEEKS AFTER THE WAIRARAPA

OHAU GRAVELS WINEMAKER JANE COOPER

★★★★ TE MANIA NELSON PINOT GRIS 2009 $21.99 -3 MED/DRY
This winery's unassuming livery belies the quality it achieves and this wine is a case in point. Lime and guava scents pave the way to a well-balanced, fleshy yet firm mouthful. It's dryish and would be in its element as an apéritif.

★★★★ WAIMEA BOLITHO SV NELSON PINOT GRIS 2009 $24.90 -2 MED/DRY
This sweeter wine from a single vineyard provoked lively panel discussion. The rich mix of feijoa, lychee, red apple and stone fruit flavours was appreciated by John Belsham and Anna Flowerday for its juicy depth. Cameron Douglas felt the wine was overly defined by sweetness.

★★★★ WAIMEA ESTATES NELSON PINOT GRIS 2009 $21.90 -2 MED/DRY
Winemaker Mike Brown harnesses a typically lively, taut Nelson structure to attractively spicy citrus, Pacific Rose apple and pear flavours. Balanced, tasty, vivid... It's an easy wine to befriend. Enjoy a chilled glass or two with an antipasto platter.

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riesling

A tight circle of devotion surrounds Riesling, a fan base forever wondering why its chosen variety isn't bigger than The Beatles. It's hard to argue with these Riesling lovers when you consider the variety's central attributes. It offers little scope for winemaker tricks – Riesling is all about fruit purity; Riesling is where Riesling lives, being the equivalent of Pinot Noir in its capacity to reflect its place of upbringing. It also has an ability to age that adds a dimension no other aromatic can match. Our panel's Riesling devotees were delighted with the quality of the tasting's top wines, almost all of which were drawn from the outstanding 2009 vintage.

BEST BUYS

NZ RIESLING

★★★★★ BOULDEVINES RIESLING 2009 **$16.50**

★★★★★ HIGHFIELD ESTATE MARLBOROUGH RIESLING 2009 **$18-$20**

top 5

NZ RIESLINGS

1. ★★★★★ BOULDEVINES RIESLING 2009 **$16.50**
2. ★★★★★ FORREST THE DOCTORS' RIESLING 2009 **$20-$22**
3. ★★★★★ DOMAIN ROAD RIESLING 2009 **$20-$22**
4. ★★★★★ VILLA MARIA CELLAR SELECTION RIESLING 2009 **$22.99**
5. ★★★★★ HIGHFIELD ESTATE MARLBOROUGH RIESLING 2009 **$18-$20**

FOOD MATCHES

Riesling repasts

Very few foods don't marry well with Riesling. Here are some likely escorts from this issue.

- Fettuccine al Ragù (page 79) **Highfield Estate Marlborough Riesling 2009**
- Roasted Fish with Tomatoes, Zucchini, Pancetta & Green Olives (page 122) **Bladen Marlborough Riesling 2009**
- Tuna Kebabs with Olive & Caper Salsa (page 119) **Amisfield Dry Riesling 2009**

top 1 wine

NEW ZEALAND

riesling

BEST BUY

★★★★★

BOULDEVINES RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $16.50 1-5 DRY

Everything you want from a dry New Zealand Riesling is here... purity, complexity, elegance of structure and an intensity that is somehow joyous and serious at the same time. Salivating acids support flavours of lime blossom, green tea and mandarin zest. Poise and balance are maintained through to a lengthy finish. "It's a timeless expression of Riesling," said John Belsham. "It will maintain that purity... it will never blow out but will age gracefully."

DREW INSPIRATION

Drew Ellis was politely shown the door by Australian immigration in 2003. Born and raised on New York's Long Island, he had gone to Australia to study viticulture and winemaking at Charles Sturt University. But studying was one thing, staying to work quite another, Drew discovered. So he headed across to Marlborough.

Seven years on Drew is well settled with a Kiwi wife (Lisa), a New Zealand passport and some impressive wines to his credit as winemaker at Marlborough's Bouldevines Estate Vineyard, which he joined in 2005. Bouldevines is owned by Phil and Janey Walsh, who began as grape growers on Dog Point Rd in the late 1970s and finally set up their own label a few years back.

"Aromatics have always appealed to me," says Drew. "Riesling has so many different characters that can come out; I think that's why every winemaker loves it so much."

The 2009 Riesling made him particularly happy. It was almost May when the grapes were brought in. "They had developed good late-harvest characters – apricot and savoury – but were still clean," he said. "There was no botrytis and we made a dry wine."

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nz riesling

2 ★★★★★ **FORREST THE DOCTORS' RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $20-$22** -4 **MEDIUM**
Marlborough stalwart John Forrest believes in Riesling, and the panel believed in his wines, none more so than this stylish expression. Florals and an unusual white pepper note lend decorum to a racy freshness. Cameron Douglas: "It's a wine you want to show off with contrasting (savoury/spicy) – rather than complementary (sweet/citrusy) – food."

3 ★★★★★ **DOMAIN ROAD RIESLING 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $20-$22** -4 **MED/DRY**
Ah, the things Central Otago can do with Riesling... This is lean, limey, uninhibited and big in terms of its fruit expression. Beneath the lemon curd and lime flavours lies a savoury minerality, the kind that Anna Flowerday adores (see page 138). Have it with blue cod fillet, preferably grilled on the beach.

TASTING RESULTS
NZ RIESLING

5 STARS OUTSTANDING	6
4½ STARS EXCELLENT	3
4 STARS VERY GOOD	8
3 STARS GOOD	26
NO AWARD	60
TOTAL	103

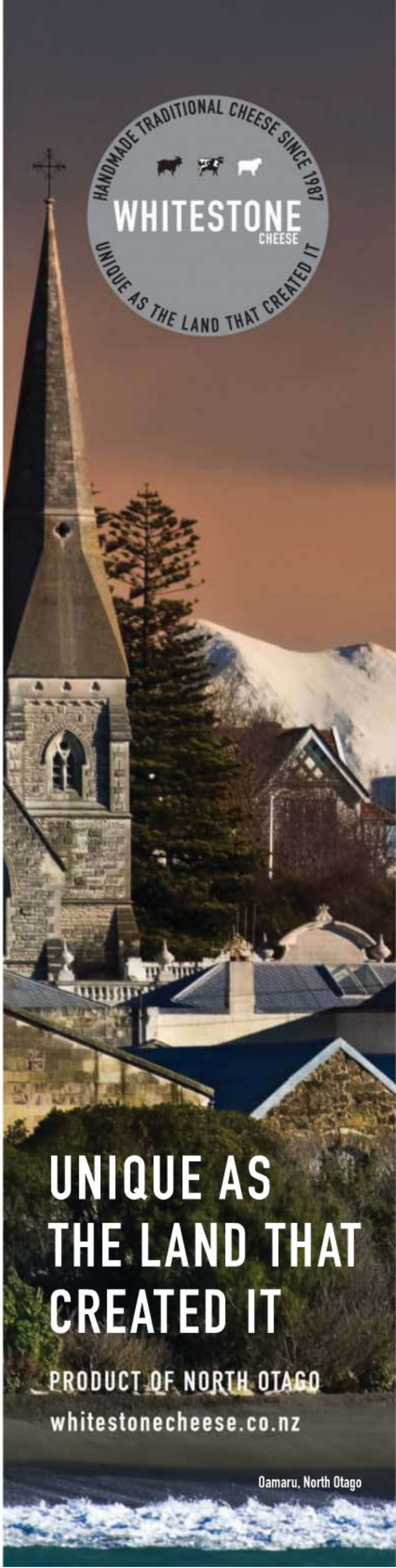
4 ★★★★★ **VILLA MARIA CELLAR SELECTION RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $22.99** -3 **DRY**
The acids in this wine were well received. One judge described them as "ripe and palatable – not hard". For another they were "crunchy". Taut and elegant, with lemon sorbet notes and a lick of spice, this is a Riesling to have with scallops seared with olive oil and sprinkled with coriander.

5 ★★★★★ **HIGHFIELD ESTATE MARLBOROUGH RIESLING 2009 $18-$20** -4 **MEDIUM**

BEST BUY

Plenty of this Riesling is poured at the excellent Highfield Estate winery restaurant – it's stunning with the Marlborough rock oysters. This wine is so fragrant Anna Flowerday said she could imagine dabbing it behind her ears. Prepare for a big burst of tangerine zest.

★★★★★ **FORREST THE VALLEYS BRANCOTT RIESLING 2008 (MARLBOROUGH) $30-$33** -5 **MED/DRY**
John Forrest has made an intriguing wine that reveals itself slowly... behind the savoury, austere veil reclines a compelling core of lime, cooked apple and herbes de Provence notes. It will be even more interesting with sashimi and pickled ginger.



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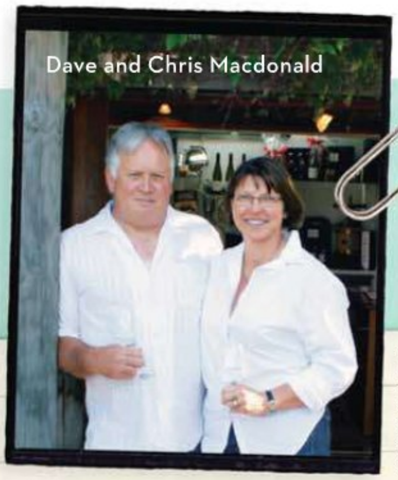

DENI MACDONALD

HEART STRINGS

"Aromatics are our heart of hearts," says Chris Macdonald, who owns Bladen Wines with her husband Dave. They were first to plant Pinot Gris in Marlborough in 1989 (they also planted Gewürztraminer that year, adding Riesling in 1991). Says Chris, "We planted those varieties first because we love drinking them."

★★★★½ BLADEN MARLBOROUGH RIESLING 2009
$20 -3 **DRY**
Be led down a perfumed garden path – white flowers, spice, lime leaf. Then be refreshed by a mouthful of lemon zest and fine, slaty acidity. Bladen is a hands-on, boutique operation where plenty of care goes into getting it right in the vineyard. It shows.

> **IT'S LIKE STEPPING OUTSIDE JUST AFTER IT HAS BEEN RAINING… ALMOST LIKE HAVING A RIVER PEBBLE IN YOUR MOUTH**
> ANNA FLOWERDAY ON MINERALITY IN RIESLING

★★★★½ MT DIFFICULTY TARGET GULLY RIESLING 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO)
$21.95-$24.95 -4 **MEDIUM**
You know you're in good hands from the moment your nose is greeted by the intense herbal, musk and honeysuckle aromas. Attractively fleshy, stone-fruit and apple notes are well framed by crisp acids – the perfect foil for foie gras.

★★★★½ WEST BROOK MARLBOROUGH RIESLING 2009 $19.95-$22.95 -3 **MED/DRY**
This wine exemplifies one of the joys of Riesling; a freshness akin to biting into a crisp apple – "Pacific Rose, specifically," said Cameron Douglas, who also appreciated the sherbet-like minerality. Savour with Kalamata olives.

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NORTH BY NORTHWEST

The Pinckney name's involvement in wine dates from the dawn of the modern era of Central Otago wine. For a while in the 1970s, Ann Pinckney's Arrowtown winery was the only one in the region. Today, her cousin, Tom Pinckney, and his wife, Jan, run Northburn Station. A decade ago they planted vines on the fringe of their station by Lake Dunstan. Their aromatic wines are made by Jan's brother, Richard Broadhead, a champion of Central Otago Riesling. "It has been undervalued for a long time but I strongly believe it has a great future," he says.

★★★★ AMISFIELD DRY RIESLING 2009 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $30 -4 DRY
Claire Mulholland produced many a fine Riesling at Martinborough Vineyard and the flow continues now she is at Amisfield. Bold lemon squash, stone fruit and ginger flavours are presented with a dry delicious flourish. A firm textural edge lends a note of austerity.

★★★★ CHARLES WIFFEN RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $19.50 -3 MED/DRY
Tension and elegance sashay hand in hand down a citrus-lined path. Lemon zest and kaffir lime leaf flavours are supported by bright, crisp acidity. It is balanced, pure and quite sweet. Mighty with seared prawns and hot lime sauce.

★★★★ FORREST THE VALLEYS WAIRAU DRY RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $27-$30 -3 DRY
Now in its 16th vintage and, as always, a pleasure for its openhearted exuberance. Scents of wild flowers and jasmine introduce a mouthful offering plenty of ripeness, punch and flavour. Its weight and acidity point to cellaring potential.

★★★★ GIBBSTON VALLEY THE EXPRESSIONIST SERIES LE FOU RIESLING 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $35-$38 -4 MEDIUM
Le Fou is French for madman and you'd be mad not to try it if you love Riesling. Shapely and schisty, this is generous, lively and warm, with tropical fruit notes beside the citrus. Try it with steamed blue cod with lemongrass and ginger.

★★★★ GREYSTONE RIESLING 2009 (WAIPARA) $22-$28 -3 MEDIUM
The entire panel was impressed by the Greystone's poise and powerful fruit. Lime sorbet, grapefruit and tropical fruit flavours loom large, the acid balance is well managed and an energy runs through this wine.

★★★★ NORTHBURN STATION RIESLING 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $20-$23 -4 MED/DRY
Northburn's vineyards surround a new must-visit cellar door on the western side of Lake Dunstan. A lanolin note adds interest to a limey, appley main theme. "It has mystery and complexity," noted Cameron Douglas.

★★★★ SANCTUARY RIESLING 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $18.95 -4 MED/DRY
Winemaker Dave Pearce at Grove Mill (home of the Sanctuary label) has clocked up a quarter-century of Riesling vintages. This is a smart package – juicy, intense, firmly structured and very, very lengthy. Pair with strong seafood such as paua.

★★★★ TE MANIA NELSON RIESLING 2009 $18.99 -4 MED/DRY
Rich in spice, sweet grapefruit, lime and apricot flavours, this instantly lovable wine pushes a lot of buttons with flair and finesse. A toasty overlay is the effect of a slight botrytis influence. Serve as an apéritif with a true guacamole.

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gewürztraminer

If Riesling is discipline with a twinkle in its eye, Gewürztraminer is frivolity trying hard to behave. Its exotic perfumes and voluptuous sweet-spice flavours can be heady fare and will run riot if not balanced by other elements such as acidity (see facing page). In New Zealand, the variety has quietly established a small, but strong presence. Our best practitioners make outstanding wines and the tasting panel was delighted with the quality of some new releases. Unusually for an aromatic variety, more than half New Zealand's Gewürztraminer plantings are in the North Island. This was not reflected in the results of the tasting; the lion's share of the top wines was from the south.

NEW ZEALAND

gewürztraminer

★★★★★

TE WHARE RA GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $30-$32

-4 **MEDIUM**

John Belsham called this beautifully pure rendition "the essence of Gewürztraminer". Flavours of lemon zest, rose petals, cloves, orange oil and lychees are harmoniously woven around a subtly creamy texture. A racy seam of acidity keeps things fresh; the line between richness and finesse is finely and deftly drawn. The pork terrine and chutney food match from Cameron Douglas was endorsed by all.

BEST BUYS

NZ GEWÜRZTRAMINER

★★★★★ MORTON ESTATE WHITE LABEL GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $17-$19

★★★★★ SPY VALLEY GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $19.90-$22.90

REDOUBLED EFFORTS AT TE WHARE RA

JIM TANNOCK

Since taking over Marlborough's oldest boutique winery in 2003, Jason and Anna Flowerday (right) have done nothing by halves. Quite the opposite, in fact.

Te Whare Ra was in sore need of devotion and expertise, and received both from the energetic couple. They upgraded the winery and worked hard in the vineyard, planting Pinot Gris and nursing the best established Riesling and Gewürztraminer to full potential.

On a personal level, Jason and Anna were also productive. They had twin girls in 2004 and then repeated the feat in 2007. (And they're not the only Marlborough winemakers to have achieved this double-double. George Geris of Villa Maria also has two sets of twins.)

Both Anna and Jason grew up in wine-industry families; she in South Australia's McLaren Vale, he in Marlborough. They met in South Australia where both were working. Te Whare Ra came up for sale just as they were ready to do their own thing.

"We wanted a place with history," says Jason. "And we didn't want to come here and simply make Sauvignon Blanc. The decades-old Riesling and Gewürz vines were a big draw."

Te Whare Ra is a shared effort by the two experienced, married winemakers. "We agree 90 per cent of the time," says Jason. "And the other 10 per cent makes the wines better."

The vision is to stay boutique and emphasise an organic, single-vineyard approach. Which is exactly what Anna sought when she was first deciding on a career: "I wanted a job that was also a life."

top 5

NZ GEWÜRZTRAMINERS

1. ★★★★★ TE WHARE RA GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $30-$32
2. ★★★★★ SPY VALLEY GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $19.90-$22.90
3. ★★★★★ FRAMINGHAM GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $27.95
4. ★★★★★ MORTON ESTATE WHITE LABEL GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 $17-$19
5. ★★★★ CHARD FARM GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2008 $25-$28

FOOD MATCHES

Gewürz gourmandise

Gewürztraminer loves to hunker down with spice and other strong flavours. Try it with these matches from this issue.

- Asian-Style Roast Chicken with Cucumber Salad (page 119) **Spy Valley Gewürztraminer 2009**
- Cinnamon Chicken with Tomato & Fig Salad (page 124) **Morton Estate White Label Gewürztraminer 2009**
- Cheese Tart with Oatmeal Crust (page 101) **Askerne Gewürztraminer 2007**

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2 ★★★★★ **SPY VALLEY GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $19.90-$22.90** -4 **MED/DRY**

BEST BUY

This is a succulent, generous wine from a winery that has forged a strong aromatics track record. The fascinating flavour spectrum includes spice – "cardamom, almost into turmeric", said Anna Flowerday – together with guava and fig notes. A very complete Gewürz.

3 ★★★★★ **FRAMINGHAM GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $27.95** -4 **MED/DRY**

A very ripe style, powerful and richly perfumed, from another seasoned Marlborough campaigner. The wine's sweetness is tempered by an intriguing five-spice flavour, while the fruit weight carries the overall richness with aplomb. A perfect foil for Peking duck.

4 ★★★★★ **MORTON ESTATE WHITE LABEL GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 (HAWKE'S BAY) $17-$19** -3 **DRY**

BEST BUY

Lavender-like aromatics move through to that classic Gewürz Turkish Delight note, along with apricot, nutmeg and lychee flavours. This combined lusciousness is presented in a dry setting, which won the admiration of Anna Flowerday: "Making successful dry aromatics is harder than you think – there's no sugar to hide behind."

5 ★★★★ **CHARD FARM GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO) $25-$28** -3 **MED/DRY**

Such fragrance! Lifted orange blossom, roses and spice. From there the laidback, soft, creamy texture has a calming effect... a seamless, ethereal quality. This moreish wine is ideal with sweetish seafood, such as caramelised scallops.

★★★★ **CHARLES WIFFEN GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $23.50** -3 **MED/DRY**

This is a beauty – a zesty, layered example from the Wairau Valley. Citrus, a touch of Brylcreem and a toasty note feature in a wine the judges felt was "impeccably clean with drive and concentration". Match to a creamy pasta with sausage.

★★★★ **SAINT CLAIR PIONEER BLOCK 12 LONE GUM GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2008 (MARLBOROUGH) $20.95-$22.95** -3 **MED/DRY**

Deep straw in colour, this wine radiates opulence in the mouth – the kind you get from a crème caramel. An orange peel Cointreau note chimes in at the finish. A slight botrytis influence adds to the spicy generosity and complexity.

★★★★ **ASKERNE GEWÜRZTRAMINER 2007 (HAWKE'S BAY) $20** -3 **MED/DRY**

This voluptuous older wine made by Craig Thomas is warm, round and powerful. Colourful dabs of ginger, peach and spice are splashed against a dryish backdrop. Serve with a chicken curry that is aromatic rather than piquant.

ACID REIGNS

Acidity, a primary component in all wine grapes, plays a particularly important role in aromatic white wines. They rely on it to supply structure, juiciness and freshness. Without acidity, these wines would be soft and dull, and underperform at the table (acidity gets your saliva glands going – perfect for food).

New Zealand's cool climate enables us to achieve high levels of natural acidity in ripe grapes. Overly hot weather, on the other hand, drains acidity while elevating sweetness. As with all things, balance is important: too much acid is not a pleasant tactile sensation. The winemaker's skill is to choreograph the elements into a harmonious whole.

TASTING RESULTS
NZ GEWÜRZTRAMINER

5 STARS OUTSTANDING	4
4½ STARS EXCELLENT	0
4 STARS VERY GOOD	4
3 STARS GOOD	12
NO AWARD	33
TOTAL	**53**

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other aromatic whites

Emerging from the large shadow cast by the aromatic "big three" is a small, but growing cluster of New Zealand white wines. Some are varietals featuring lesser-known grapes; an increasing number are blends using several varieties, often inspired by the famous white blends of Alsace and the southern Rhône. Sixteen wines were entered in this tasting, with three impressing the panel enough to receive four stars or above. It is worth remembering that beyond the mainstream is where future stars are born.

5

★★★★★ WAIMEA NELSON EDEL 2009 $21.90 -4 **MEDIUM**
Winemaker Mike Brown took his cue from Alsace for this imaginative wine, cleverly blending Alsatian varieties Riesling, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer to create something that emphasised all their strengths yet held an interest all its own. It's intensely aromatic, weighty in the mouth, with fresh pear and apple flavours underpinned by a mineral edge – serve it with Nelson scallops.

4

★★★★ MATAWHERO GISBORNE ARNEIS 2009 $30 -2 **DRY**
Arneis, a variety from northern Italy, has been quietly establishing a foothold here – four were entered in this tasting. This fleshy textured wine has an endearing fennel-cum-aniseed twist alongside cider apple and citrus notes. An excellent summer food wine: mussel fritters with a hint of chilli would be perfect.

★★★★ MONTANA SHOWCASE SERIES SAUVIGNON GRIS 2009 (MARLBOROUGH) $21.95-$23.95 -3 **DRY**
Size is an asset when it comes to exploring new territory and Montana has put its extensive resources to good use in producing this delightful wine. This new variety is aromatically similar to Sauvignon Blanc, but is more fleshy and rounded in the mouth, with chalky, soda-like notes. [A]

A GRIS TO SATISFY

Sauvignon Gris is a pink-skinned relation of Sauvignon Blanc that is gaining an increasing following in Bordeaux and the Loire Valley. Montana began trialling the grape several years ago in Marlborough and has released a 2009 Sauvignon Gris. "We're particularly pleased with the texture we're getting from the variety – it has a softer, rounder mouthfeel than Sauvignon Blanc," says Patrick Materman (right), chief winemaker at Montana.

"There are plenty of New Zealand wine drinkers who are willing to try new things and we're enjoying discovering what else is possible in Marlborough."

Try matching this wine with the Seared Kingfish with Crisp Summer Salad on page 108.

For complete wine-tasting listings visit **cuisine.co.nz** (three-star results are listed only on the website)

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To source wine listed **[A]**, contact the distributor, Pernod Ricard, ph: 09-336 8300.

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Ph: 0800-733 505
glengarry.co.nz
Sat 6 Mar
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La Barrique
Ph: 09-638 5000
Thu 25 Feb 4pm-7pm
$10 (refunded if *Cuisine* wines are bought on the night)

Waiheke Wine Centre
Ph: 09-372 6139
waihekewinecentre.co.nz
Thu 18 March 6.30pm
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Hamilton Wine Company
Embargo Restaurant
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HAVELOCK NORTH
Advintage
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3pm-5.30pm (free)

WELLINGTON
Glengarry Thorndon Quay
Ph: 04-472 7051
glengarry.co.nz
Sat 6 Mar
12pm-4pm (free)

CHRISTCHURCH
Vino Fino
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vinofino.co.nz
Tues 9 Mar 6pm

WANAKA
Wanaka Fine Wines
Ph: 03-443 7539
Tues 2 Mar 6pm
Bookings essential

Cuisine WINE TASTING

★★★★★
Outstanding quality

★★★★☆
Excellent quality

★★★★
Very good quality

★★★
Good quality (website listings only)

Drink now, don't cellar

-2 Drink now or cellar for up to two years from now

Not ready for drinking yet

Tasting Method All wines are tasted blind. If, after discussion, the tasters do not agree on a star rating, the wine will receive the rating given by the majority but dissenting comments will be included in the wine notes. The scores of winemaker judges cannot exceed those of other judges.

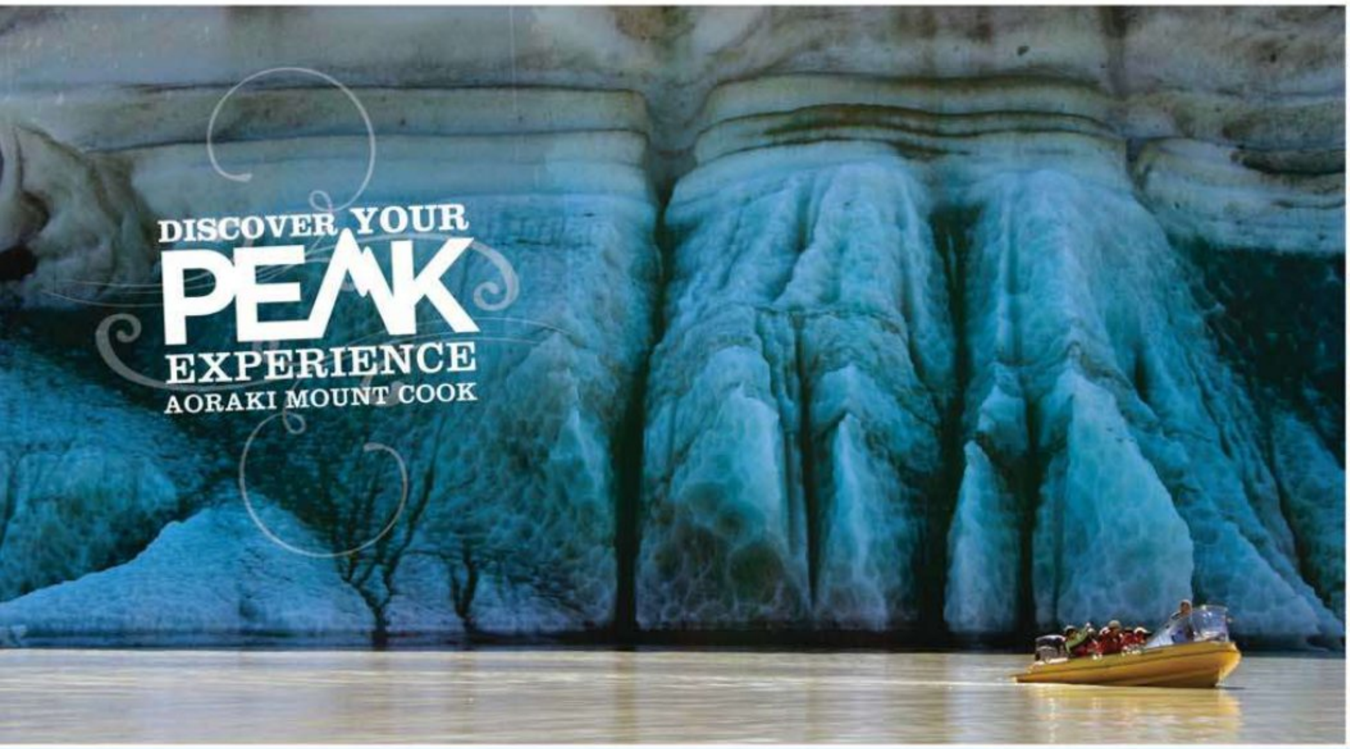
Availability All wines entered in *Cuisine* tastings must be readily available at the time of publication. However, high demand and a six-week lead time between tastings and publication can affect availability. If you cannot find the wines, contact the winery or distributor direct.

Prices Suppliers are asked to provide a retail price range for all wines entered in tastings. Prices do vary between vineyard and low-to-high volume outlets and cannot, therefore, be guaranteed. All prices are quoted in $NZ

Recommended by *Cuisine* stickers Look for these top wines as your guarantee of quality.

Gold sticker Wines awarded five stars can wear the gold five-star Recommended by *Cuisine* sticker

Burgundy sticker Wines awarded 4 1/2 and four stars can display the familiar burgundy Recommended by *Cuisine* sticker.



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THE MERCHANT OF PADUA

AN ITALIAN ANARCHIST FINDS HIMSELF AT HOME IN THE WILD AND WILFUL WINE COUNTRY OF NORTH OTAGO, WRITES JOHN SAKER

Antonio Pasquale comes from Padua, the northern Italian city most famous, perhaps, for appearing in several of Shakespeare's Italian plays. And there is something Shakespearean about Antonio… shades of Falstaff in his large, ebullient presence; a little touch of Harry in his pursuit of adventure; a breath of Hamlet in his philosophic bent.

As a young man, Pasquale was drawn to the anarchist movement and its idea of constant revolution. Today, he refers to himself as a "rich hippie" and has taken a very strong – revolutionary – position in one of our newest wine regions.

His more-than-$3-million investment in wine from the Hakataramea and Waitaki Valleys culminated late last year in the opening of the Kurow Winery, the first working winery and cellar door in the region, one that has shown great promise but also some inconsistency over the past half dozen vintages.

But bold moves are what Pasquale is about. He arrived in the Bay of Islands on a yacht in 1996 and liked what he found – a law-abiding country with little corruption and a lot of opportunity. The latest in a line of Pasquale traders and entrepreneurs, he began investing in rural land and dairy herds. One holding was just north of Kurow in the wild and beautiful Hakataramea Valley, where his farmer neighbours included the McCaws (the current All Blacks captain grew up in the valley).

After a time, Pasquale had a sense that a north-facing slope on his property would be suitable for winegrowing. The tasty crop from nearby fruit trees convinced him. Planting began and the first grapes were harvested in 2003.

WHERE DO I COME FROM?

Where does the produce we eat and drink really come from? In a world of often disingenuous labelling, more and more of us want assurance. These concerns gave rise to Oritain, a New Zealand company that collects the unique molecular signatures of specific food regions. The signatures identify origin precisely and already New Zealand producers of apples, honey and olive oil are authenticating the provenance of their products through Oritain.

Only two local wine labels have so far taken the step – Pasquale (and its Kurow Village brand) and Black Quail of Central Otago. Antonio Pasquale is surprised there aren't more. "When I talked about it to other producers, they didn't seem interested. Yet it is so important – wine is all about place." **oritain.com**

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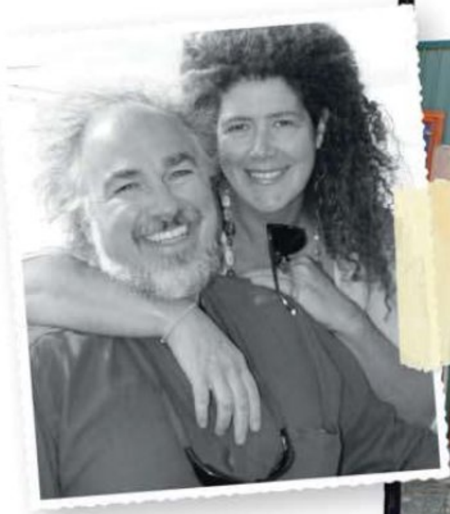

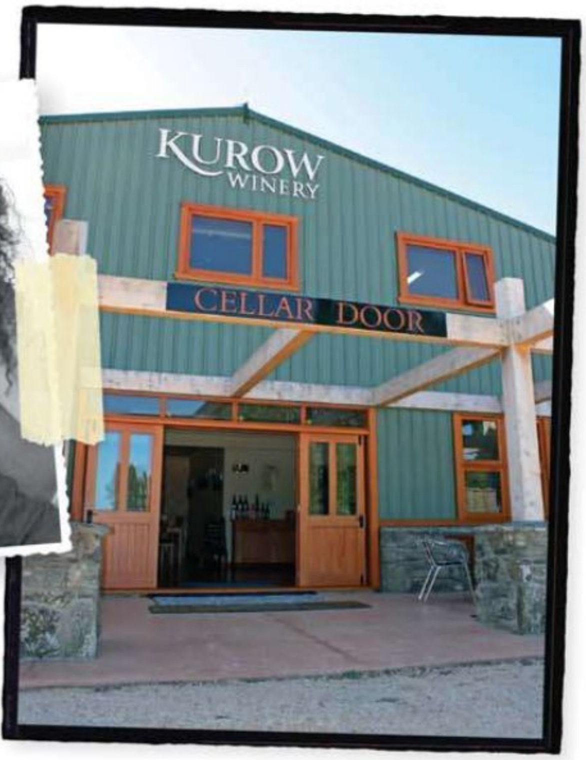

Just south, around Kurow, pioneer vineyards were also under way in the limestone-rich Waitaki Valley. It would be his next stop.

Seven years on, Pasquale has vines on sites in both valleys and Italian varieties such as Arneis sit alongside proven players Pinot Noir, Riesling and Pinot Gris. There are two labels: reserve wines, which carry the Pasquale name and are only produced in exceptional years; and the Kurow Village brand. Every bottle can be traced to the soil it came from, thanks to the input of the innovative company Oritain (see "Where do I come from?").

The wines are made by Andy Nicole (formerly of Lincoln Vineyards), while Murray Turner manages the winery and vineyards and his wife, Diana, runs the cellar door, which is open seven days, 11am-5pm. An attractive refurbishment featuring local stone and a floor of purpleheart timber from French Guyana has created a welcoming, spacious interior.

TANIA ANDERSON

The new winery will also reach out to other growers, as previously all Waitaki Valley wines had to be made elsewhere. For Murray Turner, it's all about the two Rs: "This, I hope, will help the whole region gain respect." ●

■ **5292 Kurow-Duntroon Rd (4km south of Kurow), ph: 03-436 0443**

Left: Antonio Pasquale and his wife, Stefania; opposite: the Pasquales' Hakataramea Valley Riverside Vineyard

DROPPING IN

A month after the Kurow Winery cellar door opened for business, the Waitaki Valley doubled its wine tasting/retail facilities with the arrival of The Vintner's Drop. Located in the old post office in Kurow's main street, an attractive 1930s art deco building made from Oamaru sandstone, The Vintner's Drop was established by Jim Jerram of Ostler Wines – "I'd had enough of doing tastings at home" – and Steve Hotton of the nearby Valley Café and Bakery. "It's fundamentally Ostler, but we're proud to also offer almost the entire range of Waitaki Valley wines," says Jerram. "It's great for people to see the range of tastes. And so far we've had all the success we could have wished for."

■ **45 Bledisloe St, Kurow, ph: 03-436 0545**

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John Hawkesby
Wine Writer

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www.cablebayvineyards.co.nz
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Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc **with a touch of pink**

(and now dripping in silver)

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A perfect match, like strawberries and cream, Pink offers the delicate charm of

Sauvignon Blanc with a touch of pink

(and the added appeal of looking pretty in a glass).

And what's wrong with that, we hear you ask?

SOUTHBANK
ESTATE

One of life's pleasures

Foodtown woolworths countdown

band8422

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Edited by Susan Buchanan

Africa

MOLORI SAFARI LODGE HAS QUICKLY ATTRACTED A CLIENTELE OF THE FAMOUS AND POWERFUL – THEY COME TO SEE THE WILDLIFE, OF COURSE... BUT GUESTS ALSO COME TO BE PAMPERED

TONY AMOS

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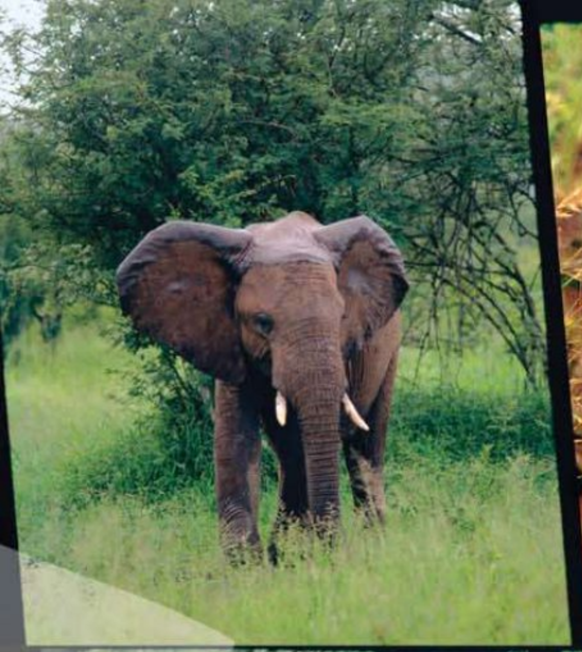

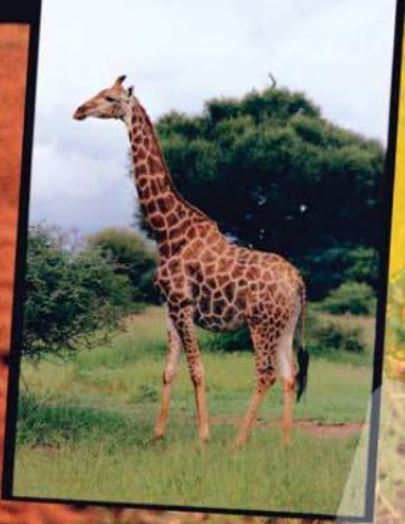

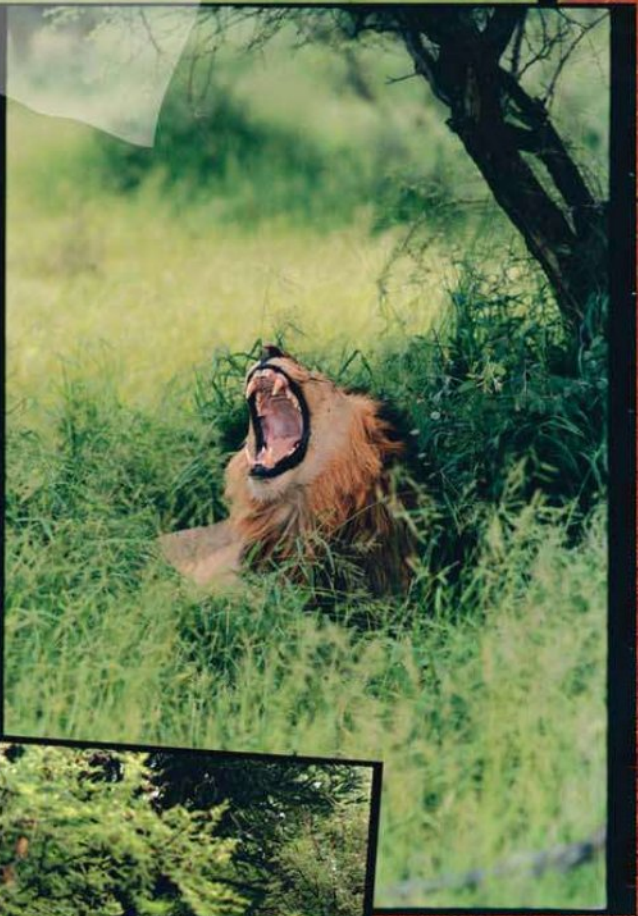

This page: Madikwe Game Reserve abounds with regional wildlife, including elephant, lion, rhinoceros and giraffe; opposite: the bar in the central area of Molori Safari Lodge is a favourite gathering place after sunset safaris

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THE LION EATS TONIGHT

IN THE MIDDLE OF A TEEMING GAME PARK ON THE EDGE OF THE KALAHARI DESERT, A GLAMOROUS LODGE BLENDS MAGICAL SAFARI EXPERIENCES AND GOURMET FOOD

PHOTOGRAPHY **ANTHONY AMOS** WORDS **SUSAN WESTWOOD**

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The evening meal on our first day at South Africa's Molori Safari Lodge came suddenly. We were 15 minutes into a game drive into the lush savannah of the surrounding Madikwe Game Reserve when our host and guide, the rather handsome Greg Lederle, abruptly slowed and signalled for us to be silent. Beside us, the revered Naledi lion brothers, both born in the reserve, were quietly crunching on the carcass of a wildebeest they had killed the day before. In the golden light of evening, it was an unforgettable moment.

Earlier that day we had had lunch in the lodge's elegant dining room. With the view to wild Madikwe passing across the reflections of a giant infinity pool, it was less primal, but the meal proved almost as memorable.

The lemon and fennel seared Scottish salmon with a semi-hot Capri salad of avocado, asparagus and tomato with lemon and porcini oil dressing was well matched with a beautiful Springfield Life from Stone Sauvignon Blanc 2008 from Cape Province. Dessert was a refreshing orange and vodka sorbet served with black cherries and raspberries and a star aniseed and mint sauce.

With just five suites at the lodge, dining at Molori is flexible. There is the formal dining room, but you can also arrange to eat on the deck of your suite, or on one of the idyllic viewing decks dotted throughout the property. One of our favourite evenings was a fabulous braai (barbecue) on the deck by the main pool.

GUESTS ARE A NEW PHENOMENON

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One of Molori's two premium suites, Molelo (fire), is accented with striking pieces such as crystal chandeliers, antique French candlesticks, crisp white sofas and African decorative touches such as a tribal drum

AT MOLORI, WHICH BEGAN AS A PRIVATE RETREAT

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The man behind Molori's cuisine is chef Willie Malherbe, who has worked for Raymond Blanc and the Rothschilds, and is happy to tailor guests' wishes to his menus.

Guests are a new phenomenon at Molori, which began as the private retreat of high-roller owners Kirk Lazarus and Ivor Ichikowitz. The pair opened the doors to paying guests just two years ago and have quickly attracted an impressive clientele of the famous and powerful. Kate Moss was checking in with a group of friends just as we left.

They come to see the wildlife, of course. As well as the lions on that first night, we would see many more animals: above the tree line the elegant

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OCHRE WALLS AND STONE FLOORS IN THE MAIN LODGE ARE HIGHLIGHTED BY AFRICAN CRAFT DETAILS

Left: A stepped infinity pool with chaises for lounging is set into decks in front of the central lodge; inset left: the lodge's gifted barman Isaac Modiko mixes a mean mojito; below left: the exquisite bedroom of one of the premium suites, Molelo (fire), features crystal lighting, with a marble-finished bathroom and spacious dressing room behind; this page: the living area of the Molelo suite with its traditional vaulted thatched ceiling

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This white-leather Fendi chaise in the Molelo suite is one of the distinctive design touches by co-owner Ivor Ichikowitz

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ON ONE OF OUR FINAL EVENINGS, AFTER A MAGICAL GAME DRIVE, WE SHARED A GLASS OF VEUVE CLICQUOT AT MOLORI'S BAR, BEFORE GOURMET DINING ONCE MORE

heads of a journey of giraffe, elephants taking mud baths in ochre clearings, warthog roaming free, a hyena high up in a cave, quietly guarding her cubs, impala happily grazing alongside zebra and a lilac-breasted roller perched on a branch.

But guests also come to be pampered. On first view, the lodge – reached via a 45-minute Cessna flight from Johannesburg to a private airstrip – appears as a reserved cluster of traditional thatched ochre buildings on a ridge in the middle of the game park. As you come closer, though, the scale and grandeur become more apparent.

The ochre walls and stone floors of the main lodge are highlighted by African craft details and offset by striking contemporary furniture. All areas open on to vast timber decks and a never-ending infinity pool with remarkable views. In the evenings, romantic tea-lights and candlelit lanterns are set around the pool edges.

The five suites are all wonderfully inviting. Three are African rustic in style, with superbly comfortable interiors – the original design was by Stephen Falcke – opening out to decks with individual plunge pools.

Bigger, more contemporary and quite breathtaking, the two more recent premium suites reflect more of the sophisticated, eclectic tastes of Lazarus. The bathrooms are finished in marble and the suites open through floor-to-ceiling glass door-walls to expansive decks with a pool, spa and outdoor shower.

Inside are striking Fendi daybeds, antique French chairs covered with zebra skin, limed candlesticks, African beaded wall panels and, in one, a vintage travel trunk that has been converted into a cocktail cabinet.

My suite had its own library with a wireless laptop and bookshelves filled with a wonderful selection of books on the history and wildlife of Africa.

Greg Lederle and his delightful partner, Riana, run the lodge with an emphasis on a personalised experience of the wonders of Madikwe, though the stylish wonders of this lodge provide stern competition. For those with the energy after the safaris and bush walks, there are fun, informative cooking classes. And, for those just out to relax, Molori offers dreamy spa treatments in a glass-walled suite immersed in the beauty of the bush. The spa also has a steam room, gym and deck for relaxing.

On one of our final evenings, following a magical game drive, we shared a glass of Veuve Clicquot at Molori's bar, before gourmet dining once more.

Our entrée was tender peppered lamb loin with a flavourful olive, feta and red onion triangle and roasted beans with a yellow pepper essence. Guinea fowl followed, wrapped in Parma ham with skordalia and roasted shiitake mushrooms, grilled eggplant, artichokes and a plum jus. Both were matched with lovely South African wines – Backsberg Chardonnay 2007 and the Boekenhoutskloof Shiraz 2004, respectively.

Dessert was a luscious white chocolate and pistachio crème brûlée with sweet blueberries served to the side on a spoon.

It was hard to believe that, not so long ago, farming was the main occupation in these parts. That all changed with the opening of the Madikwe reserve in 1991. The wildlife that had historically inhabited the region were brought back in their thousands by Operation Phoenix, including elephant from Zimbabwe and lion from the Kalahari.

As well as an abundance of the "big five" – lion, leopard, elephant, rhinoceros and buffalo – Madikwe's 75,000 hectares are now home to an extraordinary array of birds, such as the long-tailed whydah, crimson-breasted shrike, striped kingfisher, osprey and spotted eagle-owl.

From the air, we had marvelled at their new home as we flew in: the vast swathes of vivid green bushveld (the rainy season had just ended), dry gold savannah, red rocks, steep ridges and mountains, and the ribbon of the Groot Marico River. It is, in fact, South Africa's fifth-largest game reserve, but still flies under the radar.

One night we took time out from the parade of wildlife to enjoy sundowners and watch the sky change from blue to shades of violet, pink and purple over the mountains, before we continued in the velvet darkness. Once again Madikwe had cast its spell.

MOLORI SAFARI LODGE
South Africa, ph: 27-14778 8000, molori.com
The lodge is part of the Kiwi Collection, kiwicollection.com •

■ Susan Westwood and Anthony Amos flew Qantas to South Africa. Qantas offers daily services to Johannesburg via Sydney. See qantas.co.nz or ph: 0800-808 767.

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HARD BLOCK CAFÉS

JANE ADAMS takes a slicer to Sydney's exciting cheese scene

Blackwattle Deli (and left)

Formaggi Ocello

The next time you look across the counter and find yourself tossing up the joys of a gooey camembert, an arrestingly smelly washed-rind wedge, an ash-rolled goat's cheese log, or an infused block of blue, you may care to reflect momentarily on the politics of cheese.

Some would say it's as smelly as esrom, my grandmother's favourite; others would argue the latest salvos in the cheese debate are as stinging as salty feta. Few would draw analogies with smooth creamy brie. In fact, Australia's ongoing raw cheese debate took on a more fondue-like look when Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini, in Australia for the first time, added his weight to the debate, calling unequivocally for changed food safety provisions to allow local manufacture of raw milk cheese.

Whatever the regulatory outcome, there is no doubt that Australian specialty cheese has undergone a delicious renaissance over the past few years, taking cheese-eaters way beyond the slices, cheddar and red-rind edam of my youth.

Passionate local producers have nurtured a plethora of speciality brands and styles that have challenged the hold of imports and grown our appetite for fine cheese. The best are now celebrated in awards and showcased by Sydney's top chefs – including Justin North, Jared Ingersoll, Alex Herbert and Peter Gilmore. What's more, Sydney boasts several new cheesemongers, appreciation classes and cheesemaking courses for the real enthusiasts.

Australia's cheese culture is thriving – and here is a guide on how to get your slice.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS WARNES

CHEESE SHOPS

Sydney's specialist cheese shops brim with wheels, rounds, logs and wedges. Buy direct from passionate retailers who celebrate artisan producers.

Blackwattle Deli
Ph: 02-9660 6998
The sole cheesemonger amid a phalanx of fishmongers at the bustling Sydney Fish Market. An extensive range of local stars and imports is arranged temptingly in a grand display cabinet.

Formaggi Ocello
ocello.com.au, ph: 02-9357 7878
A cheese cornucopia where Carmelo and Sogna Ocello nurture and sell more than 140 cheeses, predominantly from Italy. Sleek refrigerated cabinets and a rustic ageing room add to the adventure. Top it off with a wine and cheese platter.

GPO Cheese & Wine Room
gposydney.com, ph: 02-9229 7700
Tailored wine and cheese flights in the refurbished sandstone basement of Sydney's original post office. Air-freighted gooey French imports nestle alongside Australia's best and are served with a choice of 250 wines. Daily platters.

Jones the Grocer
jonesthegrocer.com
The Woollahra branch has a small ageing room stocked solely with imports, ranging from reblochon to roquefort.

Maloneys Grocer
maloneysgrocer.com.au
The newest provedore on the Surry Hills Crown St food strip offers a large display of mostly local artisan cheese labels, plus Italian and other imports. A sibling store trades in Coogee.

Paesanella
paesanella.com.au,
ph: 02-9519 6181
An icon in Sydney's cheese world established by the late Umberto Somma. Since 1962 it has supplied the Italian community with fresh mozzarella, ricotta and bocconcini. Where once you had to take a container to the back door of the factory, now you can pop into the Marrickville shop.

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GPO CHEESE & WINE ROOM OFFERS TAILORED WINE AND CHEESE FLIGHTS IN THE REFURBISHED SANDSTONE BASEMENT OF SYDNEY'S ORIGINAL POST OFFICE

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Formaggi Ocello (and left)

Paesanella (and right)

CHRIS WARNES

MARKETS

Farmers' markets are great places to discover artisan cheeses and their stories from the makers. Take a cool-bag to protect your favourites on the ride home from Sydney's Eveleigh Farmers' Markets (every Saturday), Northside Produce Market (third Saturday) and the Growers' Market at Pyrmont Bay Park (first Saturday).

SOUFFLÉS

A perfectly light, fluffy, cheese soufflé ranks among the all-time bistro classics and no one does it better than Alex Herbert whose signature twice-baked goat's cheese soufflé stars at Bird Cow Fish. Another hot contender in the fluffy fromage stakes is served just down Crown St at Tabou.

LOCAL HEROES

Maybe the best way to discover artisan cheese is to buy and try from the producer, from Tasmania to the Sunshine Coast.

Barossa Valley Cheese Co

barossacheese.com.au

Victoria McClurg and her mother, Frances, craft a range of soft, white-mould and washed-rind cow and goat's cheeses using Barossa milk. The standouts are the Washington Washrind and the luscious, creamy Wanera.

Binnorie Dairy

binnorie.com.au

Cheesemaker Simon Gough is an avid locavore with a passion for fresh-curd cheeses. At his Hunter Valley dairy, he crafts mascarpone, quark, marinated labneh and goat's milk feta.

Bruny Island Cheese Co

brunyislandcheese.com.au

On this island off the coast of Tasmania Nick Haddow creates exceptional, curiously named and mostly hard cheeses. Try: Otto, a fresh cheese wrapped in prosciutto (bake before serving); the hard, robust cow-goat blend The Bastard; and a goat's milk blue made only from spring milk, Pan.

Fromart

fromart.com.au

In a blind tasting you'd swear Christian Nobel's raclette, made on the Sunshine Coast, was straight from Zurich. A specialist in Swiss-style hard cheeses, his latest effort, Truffé, is a splendid truffle-infused Jersey milk cheese.

Grandvewe

grandvewe.com.au

A flock of East Friesland sheep grazing on lush Tasmanian pasture provides the milk for Grandvewe's four cheeses, including a vine-wrapped log, Ewe Bewety, and the manchego-style Primavera.

Holy Goat

Ph: 03-5474 8289

High-rollers of the specialist cheese world – Ann-Marie Monda and Carla Meurs – have won countless awards for their organic goat's cheeses. Their herd grazes on native pasture just east of Castlemaine in Victoria. Try Skyla – a creamy, nutty log with a wrinkly skin – and La Luna.

Hunter Valley Cheese Co

huntervalleycheese.com.au

Another Hunter-based specialist cheesery that has a humdinger washed-rind. Book for a structured tasting.

Small Cow Farm

smallcowfarm.com

The milk for the mostly white-mould cheeses from this Southern Highlands producer in NSW comes from the diminutive Irish breed Dexter. Small cow is best known for its PetitVache brie and camembert. It also offers two-day cheese workshops.

Udder Delights

udderdelights.com.au

A family concern in the Adelaide Hills regarded for its consistent range of mildly flavoured handmade goat's cheeses, including Oscar, an aged, ashed log. Cheesemaking classes also.

Woodside Cheesewrights

woodsidecheese.com.au

Any cheese named after a long-dead Italian mathematician deserves your attention, and Kris Lloyd's homage to Fibonacci won't disappoint. A creamy, slimline round of gloriously white, runny when ripe, velvety cheese. The rest of the selection at the Woodside SA cellar door.

CHEESE COURSES

newzealandcheeseschool.co.nz
mcintoshandbowman.com

If you are seriously into curds and whey, there are numerous DIY courses available. In addition to those mentioned above, Charles Sturt University and Neil Willman of Cheese Expertise offer regular hands-on tutorials. (Willman also tutors for the New Zealand Cheese School; see page 19.)

UK-trained cheesemonger Claudia McIntosh runs what must rank as the world's most unexpected cheese appreciation session – at historic Fort Denison on the tiny fortified Sydney Harbour island called Pinchgut. •

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WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY...

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Mary Tyrie - Caterer:
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Daryl Crimp - Chef:
"I have been using Wasabi Knives extensively for 3 years and now find they are my constant companions in the kitchen. The unique Wasabi knives are well balanced, hold their edge and slice effortlessly".

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The ratings reflect the reviewers' experience of food, wine, ambience and service, with food given the most weight. We include restaurants that provide a reasonable experience in all or most of these areas and do not feature any restaurant that would score no stars as we regard these as less than satisfactory. Why waste our readers' good time?

★okay ★★good ★★★very good
★★★★excellent ★★★★★outstanding
$ = up to $15; **$$** = $16-$24; **$$$** = $25-$32;
$$$$ = $32+ for a typical main course including vegetables and GST.

Auckland

VERBENA BAR & BISTRO

★★★

6 Birkdale Rd, Verrans Corner,
Birkenhead, ph: 09-483 9571
Dinner Tues-Sat (bar opens at 5pm)
$$$

It is a mark of a well-rounded urban-dining culture that good restaurants and cafés can be found all throughout a city – from the central streets to leafy neighbourhoods and outer suburbs – close to both homes and workplaces. Auckland is not blessed in this regard. Travel more than a couple of kilometres from the downtown precinct and there are not enough good eateries.

Thank goodness, then, for Verbena, which sits prominently on a busy corner in Birkenhead on the North Shore.

Owner Stephen Thompson will be recognised by many as the former executive chef at the Auckland Sheraton, by former students of the School of Hospitality at AUT where he taught, and as one-time executive chef at the Sheraton complex at Denarau in Fiji. Verbena is his baby and he has worked hard to create a friendly, relaxed suburban venue.

KEN DOWNIE

You can enjoy a quiet drink at the newly refurbished bar that fronts the street or have a meal in the restaurant proper, which sits above an immaculate, cloistered garden, lovingly planted with native trees and shrubs by a previous owner. You could argue that the ageing restaurant building itself deserves similar attention.

With his years of experience, it is no surprise Thompson ensures a high level of professionalism. The mature wait staff are pleasant and accommodating (although they need to brush up on their menu knowledge and undertake a few minor refinements in the etiquette of food service).

Prices are reasonable and compare favourably to much less accomplished restaurants further towards town. The wine list, while not extensive or completely balanced, has something for all tastes.

From the kitchen, there are flashes of flair mixed with some lesser niggles. A crisper cheese wafer would have added that final polish to an excellent baked goat's cheese cake that was light and well executed; a slightly more generous seasoning of the five-spice duck breast would have given that dish an additional lift. The slow-roasted lamb, on the other hand, was deliciously succulent and tasty, the well-seasoned crust showing a deft hand in the kitchen.

Unfortunately, the hapuku main could not be saved by the addition of a refreshing fruit compote. The fish was overcooked and dry while the mass of fried polenta was heavy and fought hard for attention. This combination was not a success and needs rethinking.

The desserts, standard offerings, are well considered if a little unimaginative. We chose the platter selection where the best were definitely the lemon tart and the chocolate and walnut fudge.

My main concern on my most recent visit was with the direction of the menu. It was in January and there was no real evidence of lighter seasonal food – little in the way of fish or summer salads. The menu seemed stuck in autumn.

Overall, dining at Verbena is a warmly welcoming and satisfying experience with uncluttered, balanced dishes in a classic vein, for the most part evenly executed and, judging by the busy tables, valued by the many locals who have become regulars and by people like us who visited out of curiosity to find out whether suburban Auckland diners are being well served.

KERRY TYACK

QUEST FOR THE BEST

Cuisine
RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR 2010
★★★★★
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Mercedes-Benz

Entries are open for the sixth annual *Cuisine* NZ Restaurant of the Year Awards. And we are pleased to have the continued support of associate sponsor Mercedes-Benz.

The competition is open to all New Zealand restaurants and cafés that have been open for at least six months. Entries must be in by Friday 9 April and entry forms can be downloaded at cuisine.co.nz

Winners will be announced in August.

Find more magazines at www.magazinesdownload.com

restaurants

Verbena's Dessert Platter with Grilled Brioche with Poached Rhubarb, Crème Brûlée, Lemon Tart, Chocolate Sponge with Vanilla Ice-Cream & Chocolate & Walnut Fudge

Find more magazines at www.magazinesdownload.com

THE GROVE
★★★★★
St Patrick's Square, Wyndham St, City, ph: 09-368 4129, thegroverestaurant.co.nz
Mon-Fri 12pm to late, Sat 6pm to late
$$$$

I like the word "grove". It conjures up images of leafy trees filtering dappled sunlight. Maybe a picnic? Of course, it's not quite like that at The Grove restaurant. But it's a very pleasant place to be.

It opens off St Patrick's Square, itself a pleasant recess in a part of town that's otherwise all about business. Once home to another distinguished restaurant, Le Brie, this establishment has been owned by Californian couple Michael and Annette Dearth for five years and both had much experience in San Francisco restaurants before arriving here.

They've had a knack for finding fine chefs to create distinctive menus that have always caught attention for the right reasons. First, Michael Meredith, then Sid Sahrawat, both of whom have gone on to open their own restaurants, Merediths and Sidart, respectively. Now Benjamin Bayly, who latterly worked in the recently relaunched Kermadec, presides over the kitchen.

The menu is intriguing to read without being overwrought and as the dishes arrive we find a few pleasant surprises on our plates. Crisp pork cheeks with heirloom beets, blue bantam egg and bitter greens came as a breaded patty, for want of a more fitting word. Artfully arranged on the greens, this was halved to reveal its deliciously soft meaty centre, reminding me of the old chocolate ad that asked how do they get the filling in the centre? The tiny beets, both red and gold, were perfect and all was set off with a balsamic reduction – old-school style cooking revisited.

My friend's entrée of perfectly cooked and seasoned seared scallops came with hand-rolled macaroni containing the lightest scallop mousse with a touch of coriander, asparagus and surprisingly complementary trumpet mushroom, she thought.

The mains continued to delight. John Dory, glazed with verjus and cooked to perfection with lightly crisp skin, came with pickled grapes and a tantalising reduction with a hint of something we couldn't quite grasp. On enquiry we learned it was a touch of garam masala. Just brilliant and a mark of the light, clever hand in the kitchen delivering diffused and coherent flavours punctuated with accents.

The wine list is more of a tome, but there's no need to be daunted. Dearth, a highly seasoned sommelier with a clear passion for wine, is ready with intriguing suggestions for matches. Such as the Macvin du Jura dessert wine, a sort of aged "reduction" of Savagnin grapes, he advised for the pork cheeks.

They just make it so easy for you, but it's no picnic. It's way better than that.
TONI MASON

A CLEVER HAND IN THE KITCHEN DELIVERING COHERENT FLAVOURS

The Grove's executive chef Benjamin Bayly; top: Crisp Pork Cheeks with Heirloom Beets, Blue Bantam Egg & Bitter Greens

KEN DOWNIE

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Red Brick Kitchen & Bar; Chorizo & Sage Tortellini

Red Ginger

RED BRICK KITCHEN & BAR

★★½

46 Parnell Rd, Parnell, ph: 09-377 2170, redbrickparnell.co.nz

Mon-Sat 12pm to late

$$$

Parnell has felt a bit cloistered lately – a little reserved, with less social activity than former days. So it was heartening to see a new venture open up there late last year.

Red Brick Kitchen and Bar is nothing if not descriptive. The historic brick building, a coffee house early last century, sits opposite Parnell's Fraser Park with a view of the city skyline. And it's a restaurant with a bar area where you can call in for just a drink and order from a substantial bar menu that includes standards like salt and pepper squid, risotto balls, pork and prawn dumplings, to name but a few.

When it comes to dining, of the seven entrées, three are offered as mains as well. Like the chorizo and sage tortellini, which arrived in a healthy portion anointed with nut brown butter and topped with a Waldorf salad – apple, celery and walnuts. The pasta is nicely made, with a bit of bite, while the filling is more mellow than expected, lacking the spicy kick of the advertised chorizo. This, unfortunately, led to a misstep by our waiter, who suggested a match of Craggy Range Merlot that the dish couldn't stand up to.

My friend's scallops with capsicum couli were well cooked – tender inside and caramelised out, but the bed of saffron and potato salad was verging on surplus to requirements.

There has been a conscious effort to keep the mains under $30 and they, too, are generously proportioned. The trio of pork comprises slow-cooked belly, fillet and handmade Toulouse sausages from the local Gladstone Butchery, served with a sage mash, apple compote and cider jus. A hearty success.

The meltingly good confit duck leg and kumara mash came with a delightful red leaf salad spiked with pomegranate. The little jug of quince red jus was well flavoured, but little was needed to accompany the duck.

The highlight of desserts was the mango and ginger brûlée with almond biscotti, with a great texture and light crisp crust.

The wine list offers lots of interesting choice with plenty by the glass including tasting sizes.

It's a friendly place with a cosy ambience and, just off the main Parnell strip, a good hideaway for locals.

TONI MASON

KEN DOWNIE

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Wellington

ORTEGA FISH SHACK BAR

★★★★★

16 Majoribanks St, Mount Victoria,
ph: 04-382 9559, ortega.co.nz
Dinner Mon-Sat
$$$

Just as corporate executives ride Harley-Davidsons at the weekend to prove they are colourful and rebellious at heart, so they seem to revel in the illusion of louche bohemianism when they dine out.

Hence the well-heeled crowds descending on the wittily shabby-chic Ortega Fish Shack Bar, enjoying in a casual, off-duty way the same sort of nosh for which they would be milking their company account big time at an uptight fine-dining temple.

Although the "shack" opened only just before Christmas, designer Libby Beattie and architect Alan Bulleyment have created the semblance of a time-worn bohemian beachcomber café, run by several generations of rough diamonds: you are even led down the garden path by a tall story to this effect ("Why Ortega?") posted both on their website and on the wall on the stairs leading up to the loos.

NICOLA EDMONDS

The first few paragraphs of "Why Ortega?" seem quite credible; only later do you recognise it as an amusing hoax. So I had to smile when a woman at a nearby table returned from the loo and solemnly began to bore her friends with aspects of the "history".

While there is a mariners' shrine next to the bar, Japanese fishing floats suspended overhead and faded maritime memorabilia hung higgledy-piggledy over the walls, you can't alter the basic geographic fact of Ortega being not in some dodgy corner of the waterfront, but at the heart of bourgeois Mount Victoria. Accordingly, the customers are not artists, smugglers, sailors and coastal hostesses, but solicitors, wine merchants and business magnates – not to mention a hefty cross-section of the hospitality industry, here to check out the reincarnated Café Bastille.

Chef-patron Mark Limacher bought back and revamped his old business and is now in partnership with his wife, Helen, his daughter, Anna, and her partner, Davey McDonald, who is the sommelier. Anna and Davey look after the front of house, just as they did in the old days, while Peter Collins, erstwhile head chef of Café Bastille, has been brought back into the kitchen. This explains the familiar flashes of brilliance in the current repertoire, such as the duck liver pâté

Ortega Fish Shack Bar

and the sirloin with Café de Paris butter (whose 18 ingredients have never been fully disclosed).

The big departure for Ortega is the focus on seafood and fish, all of it spanking fresh. Tiddler crabs are bought cheaply, roasted whole in the oven, then crushed, simmered in fish stock and reduced with garlic, saffron and Pernod into the tastiest, most concentrated crab broth you could experience. I couldn't cope with any more than the small bowl offered. It was partnered with a delicious smoked-

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mussel fritter, topped with golden pearls of salmon roe. Warehou, normally considered a second-rate species, is here meaty, moist and flavoursome – a testament to careful cooking. It's vital, Collins says, not to overcook warehou and dry it out, as chefs routinely do. This creamy warehou and its bland pappardelle were perfect foils for the salsina – minced sundried-tomato paste, spiked with capers and anchovy and tasting really rather terrific.

NICOLA EDMONDS

The big-eye tuna, from Fiji, I probably ought not to have eaten (just like that feral fruit bat and coconut crab in Vanuatu), but in the event my staunch conservationist friend and I both sinned: he partnered raw slivers of tuna with salmon, topped with avocado to soften a generous puddle of tangy tamari lime dressing. I had my tuna briefly seared and fanned over a classic salade Niçoise, zig-zagged with an egg-free olive oil emulsion.

We finished with a perfect mousse au chocolat, luxuriously capped with chocolate ganache.

As the consistently full houses here at Son of Bastille will testify, in the capital right now, you won't dine better.

DAVID BURTON

PUBLIC
★★★
Cnr Tory St & Courtenay Place,
ph: 04-801 5115
Mon-Sun brunch, lunch and dinner
$$$

On the face of it, the Wellington Sports Café always seemed a runaway success. Over the weekend or on the night of a big match, two doormen were needed to control the influx of customers, who cheered and yahooed at the big screens over their beers, burgers and fries.

The TV screens are still in place, but nows they lie silent most of the year, coming alive only for the likes of an All Blacks test. You'd wonder, in fact, what the rowdies might make of the place now. What with the overblown flower arrangements, the gold-rose wallpaper and Florentine leaf motifs over the bar, Public could pass for a girls'-own zone – a beauty clinic, perhaps, or a day spa.

But off the bar area, there's now a separate, very formally appointed dining room, with high-backed leather chairs. And everything begins to make sense when you examine the greatly elaborated menu. With the Sports Café's backing company having gone into liquidation last year, new owners Nick and Gina Mills have relaunched the venue as the latest of Wellington's growing band of gastro-pubs, having ditched the burgers in favour of Creole-Cajun fare.

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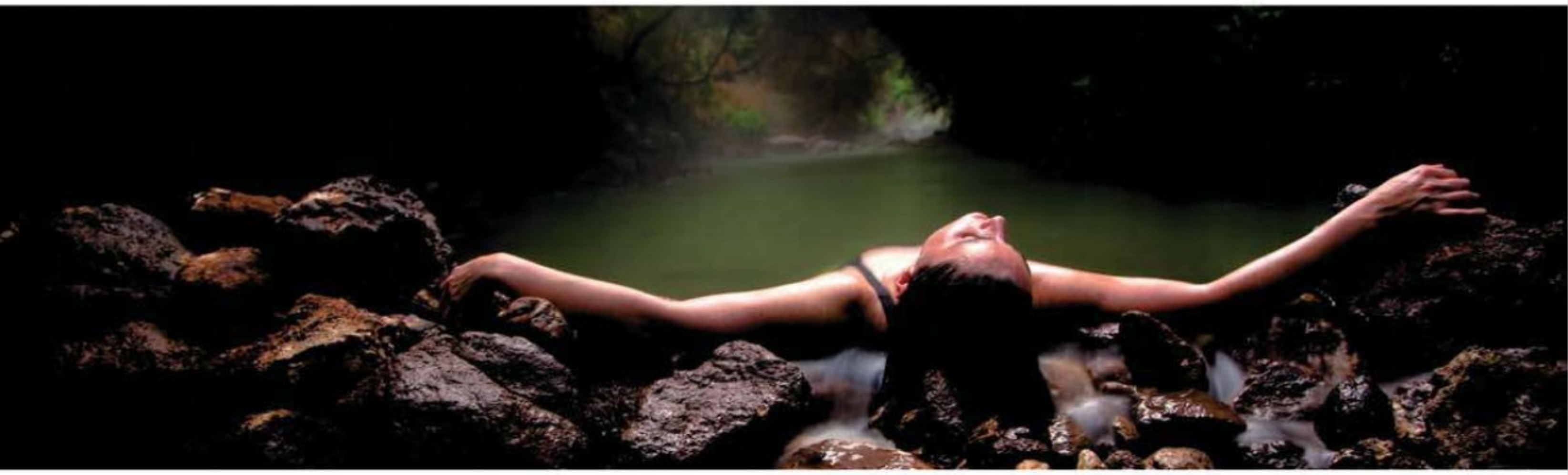

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NICOLA EDMONDS

Public

THE CUISINE OF LOUISIANA IS EMINENTLY SUITED TO A GASTRO-PUB, WITH A BALANCE OF HEARTINESS AND SOPHISTICATION

When you think about it, the cuisine of Louisiana is eminently suited to a gastro-pub, as it strikes the ideal balance between heartiness and sophistication. Creole-Cajun restaurants have existed in Wellington on and off since the 1980s, but if Kiwis now dismiss gumbo and jambalaya as ho-hum and rather old hat, then that is because they have never tasted them straight from the source, as cooked by a native Southerner, raised in New Orleans.

Don Cliburn is just such a chef. His Texas hickory-smoked barbecued baby-back ribs were a revelation. Moist and succulent, the meat deeply penetrated with a generous slathering of the house barbecue sauce, they provided an explosion on the palate. Served with house salad over a great mound of novel curly fries, the full rack would provide a challenge even to an All Blacks lock (though half racks were also available).

Cliburn also senses when to leave well alone, simply brushing the grilled scampi with herbed butter, allowing the sweetness of this much undervalued crustacean to shine through.

Although we in New Zealand lack certain key ingredients of Southern cooking, Cliburn knows the final taste he is seeking and improvises accordingly: a mix of blueberries and blackberries goes into the huckleberry sauce for his duck breast, for example; and, in place of Louisiana's iconic crawfish, both the gumbo and the jambalaya contain best-grade jumbo prawn.

Making authentic hushpuppies, however, poses no problem, since, as Cliburn points out, grits and polenta amount to much the same thing. Curiously, yet deliciously, these tiny deep-fried footballs are served with honeyed butter.

And though your rugby mates might rave about the baked cheesecake, don't for goodness' sake tell them it is made with poncey goat's milk caramel.

DAVID BURTON

Christchurch

THE CLARENDON

★★★★

Cnr Oxford Tce & Worcester St,
ph: 03-377 2100
7 days 9am to late
$$$$

There is a new décor theme going on in Christchurch. What isn't dark-stained wood is rich red and leathered, wine bottles are the new artwork and the clattering hubbub of last year has been redirected by acoustic panels into a genteel murmur.

The Clarendon restaurant and bar is the latest venture to be so attired and, despite that conformity, it oozes charm from every corner.

It opened recently in what was Barcelona, a restaurant admired for many years for its constancy. In the 19th century and for 69 years of the 20th, The Clarendon was a hotel. In its heyday it was a society grande dame but by the time the Beatles famously waved from

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The Clarendon; above right: Yellowfin Saku Tuna with Fennel Salad

KEN DOWNIE

its balcony its star was fading. The developers zoomed in and turned it into a façade surrounding a modern tower. Fortuitously, the architect included a street-level restaurant in the old hotel's bottle store. It is a lovely site, bathed in late afternoon sun, with views westward over the river.

Chef Corey Hume has stayed, which will please Barcelona regulars fearing the disappearance of their favourite risotto. The risotto is as good as ever and its seasonal changes remain adventurous.

The "to share" selection of small plates (you choose five) has several Spanish tapas dishes. The empañadas, samosa and Thai fish cakes were popular choices.

The large dinner menu features comestibles as well as entrées. Comestibles can be considered small mains, with risottos, pastas and substantial composed salads.

We had a main of belly pork with green cider sauce and a rather nice fennel and apple rémoulade perched atop the round of soft sweet meat. It really needed green vegetables – but the sides were restricted to salads or potatoes. The latter, though, were so delicious – roasted in a coating of rosemary and paprika – they could have been served among the tapas.

The star for style was awarded to the perfectly cooked groper fillet (fish of the day). Flaking in tender waves of moist flesh, it was perched atop a reddish-brown couscous, said to be flavoured with crab and sumac. But there was not much evidence of either – it would have taken tablespoons of sumac to overcome the labneh served with the fish. The topping was a pretty arrangement of tiny fried whitebait and my friend remarked on its success.

Elsewhere the menu flits from rich, as in cumin-flavoured venison served with quinoa, corn and creamy white beans, to understated, like lamb rack with lentils – but it is true to its stated intention of sourcing as many of its ingredients from local growers and producers as possible. Okay, not the tuna, and probably not the groper, but this country's provisioners have made the transport of chilled food into an art form.

Dessert was another on-trend effort, with trios of tastes cleverly combined in an unusual way. The strawberry rhubarb and ginger parfait was a small tower encasing a mini-cone of strawberry sorbet, with the plate decorated with strawberry and rhubarb salad.

The wine list reads like a pleasurable journey through New Zealand's best vineyards, with intermissions from French and Spanish establishments, both grand and intriguing, such as the Arrogant Frog Ribet Pink Syrah Rosé, from Languedoc.

KATE FRASER

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From far left: Pier 24 Restaurant & Bar; Mahimahi on Asparagus & Green Beans with Rocket Aïoli; below: Pier 24's executive chef, Michael Coughlin (right), and assistant chef, Greg Piner

Dunedin

PIER 24 RESTAURANT & BAR

★★★½

St Clair Beach Resort, 24 Esplanade, St Clair, ph: 03-466 3610, stclairbeachresort.com

7 days breakfast (brunch at weekends) until late

$$$$

One of the best things about Pier 24 at the new St Clair Beach Resort hotel is the view, albeit from ground level, of the golden sand and rolling breakers across the road at Dunedin's favourite surfing beach. Although the best view is from the bar, a mirrored wall above the banquettes at the far end of the restaurant allows those diners, too, to see along the beach to Lawyer's Head beyond the golden sand.

Besides the view, St Clair is certainly worth visiting for the food. Executive chef Michael Coughlin (who also owns Bell Pepper Blues in Dunedin) brings his considerable skills to the menu of exquisitely presented, generally light food with his signature balance of flavours and textures.

BILL NICHOL

An entrée of venison and pork terrine with fig and balsamic pickle and toasted hazelnut crumbs stood out for its perfect flavour, balance and texture. Unfortunately, instead of the Crozes-Hermitage recommended by the chef, the wine waiter, without consulting us, served a glass of Hawke's Bay Merlot-Cabernet that overpowered the dish. The French Syrah was not open, he explained later.

A thick fillet of perfectly cooked mahimahi with a crisp, light, potato crust was simply served on beans and asparagus with rocket aïoli dressing – a light, fresh dish, like many on this menu, and delicious with the recommended Sauvignon Blanc.

Diners at the next table were swooning over the roasted tomato and fennel soup with monkfish and smoked prawns, but we were fascinated by the contrast between the tender, pink and textural Cardrona merino lamb cutlets and the accompanying crisp croquette of shredded lamb shank and capers, with a flavoursome port and caper jus.

Coughlin's desserts are always worth an extra centimetre or two around the waist. Crème brûlée is one of his signatures – here he flavours it with sundried apricots in orange syrup, but I fell for the deliciously light, refreshing ginger and lemon tart with strawberries and limoncello syrup.

And what chocolate lover could pass on his bitter-chocolate ganache tart with strawberries in burnt honey and raspberry syrup? Certainly not us.

At odds with the quality of the food, however, was the proffering of a pepper grinder before you've even had a chance to taste.

Although the wine list offered a choice from a reasonable range of varieties and regions, most of the Pinot Noirs were second-tier labels and vintages were not indicated. Service was also somewhat inexperienced, although generally obliging. No doubt these and a few other glitches will be sorted as the café settles in.

We visited about a month after it opened late last year, braving the slightly off-putting notice on the door requesting a respectable standard of dress – no doubt intended to discourage wetsuit-clad surfies.

CHARMIAN SMITH ●

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shopper's notebook

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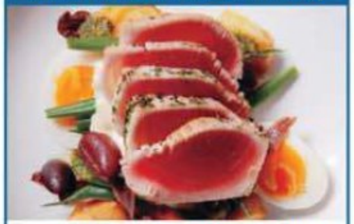

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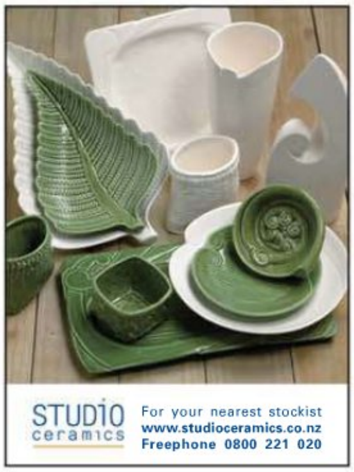

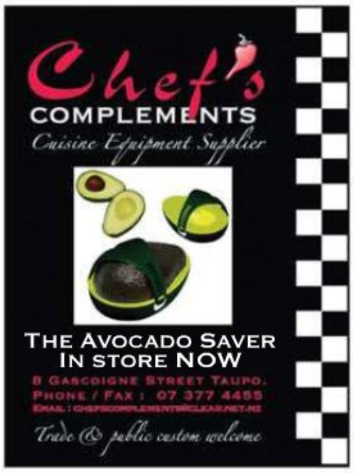

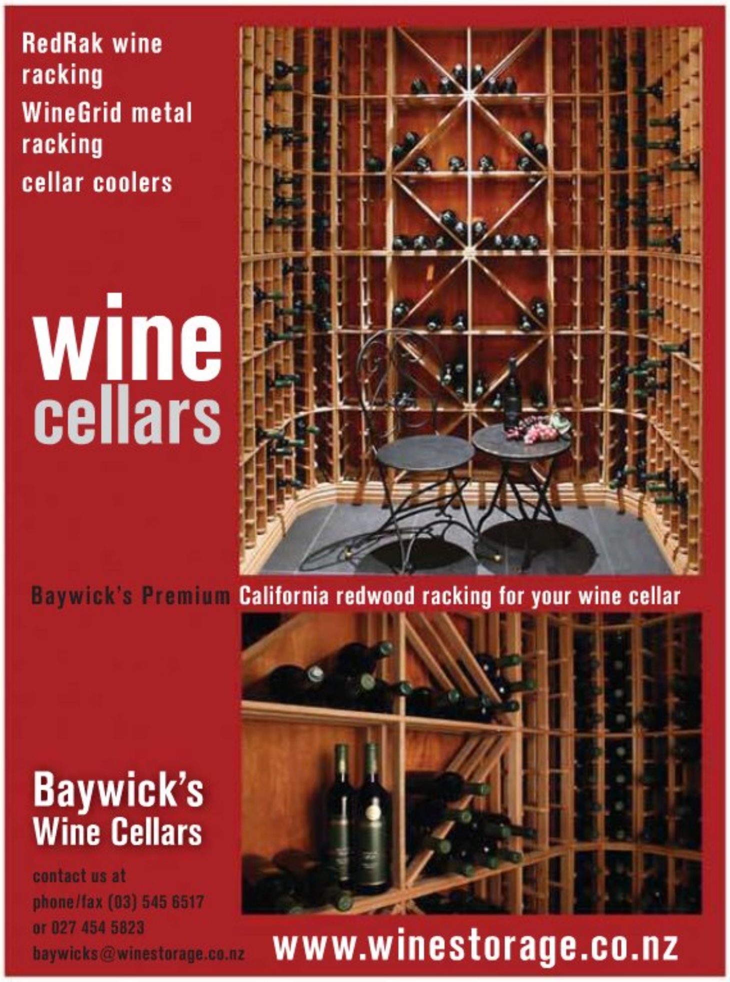

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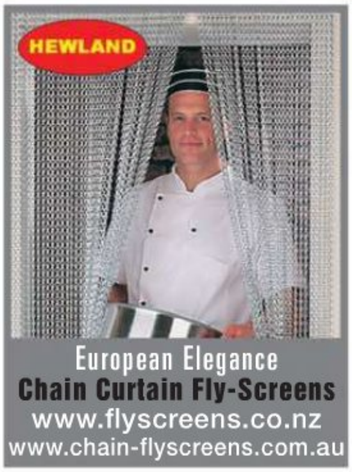

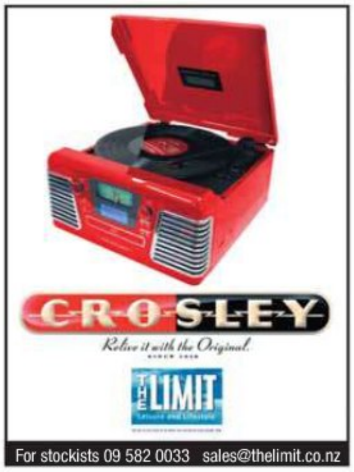

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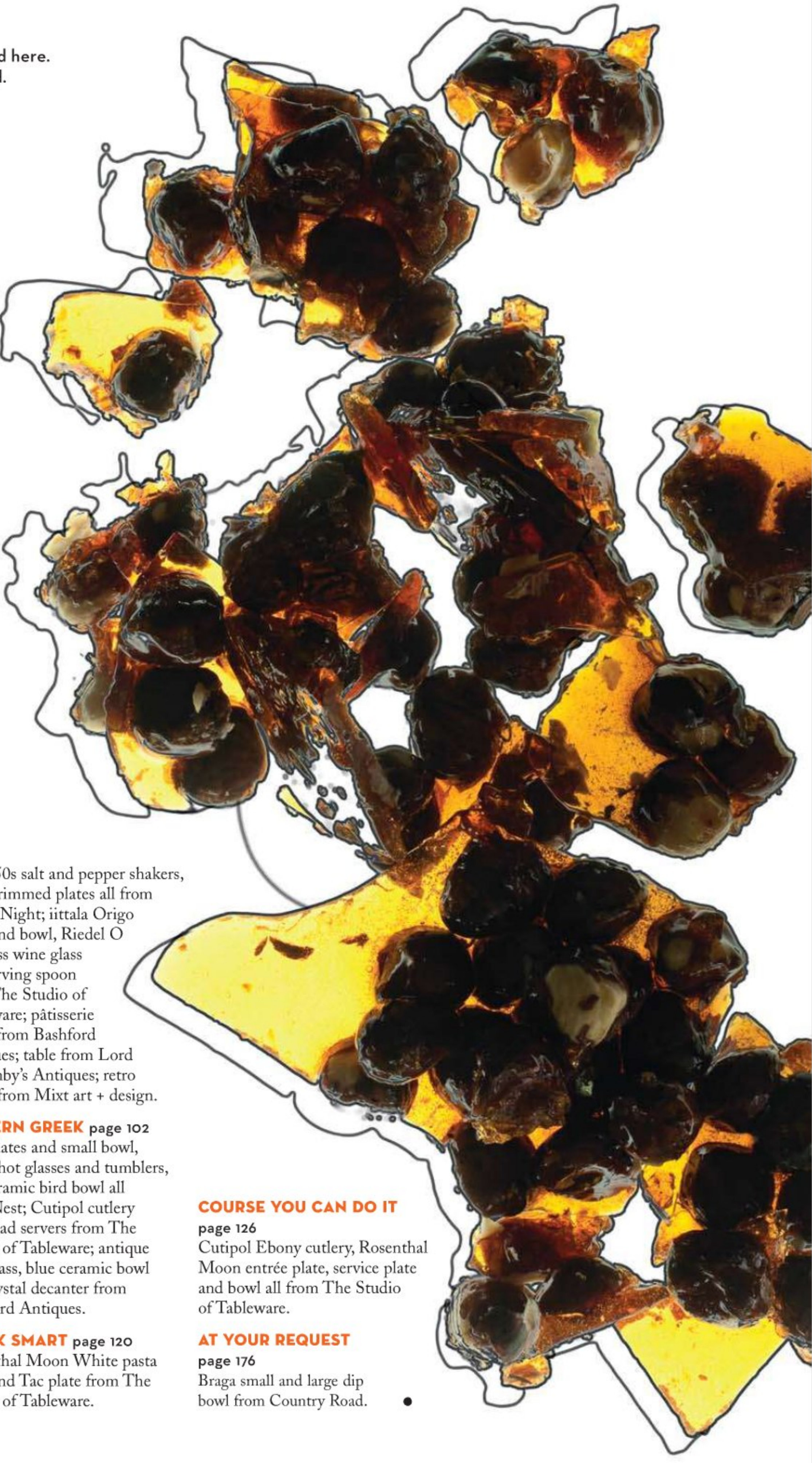

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Mikasa glasses from The Studio of Tableware; Epicurean black cutting boards from Cranfields; La Chamba bowls from French Country Collections.

RAISING THE STEAKS page 58
Katherine Smyth plates handmade by Katherine Smyth; breadboards and La Chamba plate from Cranfields.

IMPERIAL MINCE page 72
French table and chair from Philippe's French Antiques & Interiors; flooring is Fume Gris European Oak from B&O Casa; Robert Gordon dinner plate, Adama service plate, Enza oval platter, Rosenthal Moon pasta plate and Hemstitch napkin from The Studio of Tableware; Antique Kings pattern knife and fork and Victorian period knife and fork from Antiques of Epsom.

ODE TO AUTUMN page 82
250° plate and small ceramic button plates from Nest; Rosenthal TAC plate and Cutipol Noor fork from The Studio of Tableware.

POPULAR CULTURE page 92
Cutlery, German ceramics, assorted plates, ceramic serving plate, 50s salt and pepper shakers, green-rimmed plates all from Fly by Night; iittala Origo plate and bowl, Riedel O stemless wine glass and serving spoon from The Studio of Tableware; pâtisserie board from Bashford Antiques; table from Lord Ponsonby's Antiques; retro chairs from Mixt art + design.

MODERN GREEK page 102
250° plates and small bowl, T&C shot glasses and tumblers, and ceramic bird bowl all from Nest; Cutipol cutlery and salad servers from The Studio of Tableware; antique blue glass, blue ceramic bowl and crystal decanter from Bashford Antiques.

QUICK SMART page 120
Rosenthal Moon White pasta plate and Tac plate from The Studio of Tableware.

COURSE YOU CAN DO IT page 126
Cutipol Ebony cutlery, Rosenthal Moon entrée plate, service plate and bowl all from The Studio of Tableware.

AT YOUR REQUEST page 176
Braga small and large dip bowl from Country Road.

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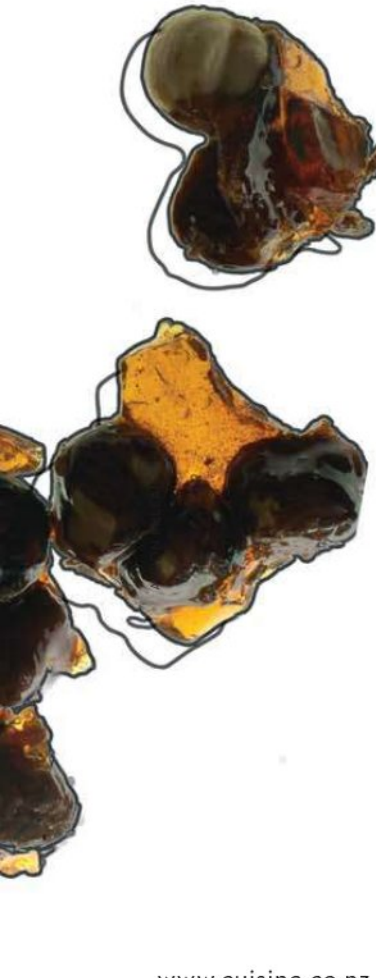

MEAT, POULTRY & GAME

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■ We recently dined at Coney Wines in Martinborough and had their marinated goat's cheese (served warm). It was lovely but looked very simple. Would it be possible to obtain this recipe?
Naera Caddie
Via email

WARMED MARINATED GOAT'S CHEESE

Margaret Coney of Coney Wines (Dry River Rd, Martinborough, ph: 06-306 8345) happily gave us the recipe for this simple and delicious starter.

- **190g goat's feta (Coney Wines uses Puhoi), cut into 4 squares**
- **4 small fresh bay leaves (or marjoram or oregano)**
- **4 sprigs rosemary**
- **4 sprigs thyme**
- **zest of 1 lemon**
- **1 teaspoon black peppercorns**
- **4 cloves garlic, finely sliced**
- **1 red chilli, finely sliced**
- **slow-roasted tomatoes (see note)**
- **extra virgin olive oil, enough to cover the cheese (Coney Wines uses Lot Eight Oil Makers blend)**

Put a square of cheese into each of 4 small ovenproof jars, glasses or ramekins. Add one of each of the herbs and divide the lemon zest, peppercorns, garlic and chilli among the jars. Place a few slow-roasted tomatoes in each jar (if using large tomatoes cut into small pieces) then cover with olive oil.

Marinate for a few hours before using. This will keep in the fridge for a few days but should be brought back to room temperature before heating.

To serve, preheat the oven to 120°C and heat the jars for 5-8 minutes until warmed through. Serve immediately with crostini or crusty bread and a few rocket leaves. Serves 4.

Note: To slow-roast the tomatoes, *Cuisine* used a punnet (250g) of cherry tomatoes cut in half horizontally and placed cut side up on a baking tray lined with baking paper. The tomatoes were sprinkled with 1 teaspoon of caster sugar, ½ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon finely chopped thyme then roasted in a slow oven (110°C) for 1½-2 hours. The tomatoes can be used immediately or stored in the fridge covered with oil.

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■ I recently took my better half out for dinner. I chose a restaurant with a good reputation for quality food here in the garden city – 50 On Park in The George Hotel. The highlight was a starter of saffron chive gnocchi, sautéed chard, green peas, Persian feta, cherry tomato, purple radish microgreens and Canterbury extra virgin olive oil. The gnocchi was beautifully soft and light in the middle and slightly crisp on the outside, the sauce was delicate and the cheese and chard were the perfect complement. Can you work your magic and approach 50 On Park, for the ingredient list and recipe?

Steve Sharland
Christchurch

SAFFRON CHIVE GNOCCHI

Executive chef Andrew Brown at 50 On Park (The George, 50 Park Terrace, Christchurch, ph: 03-371 0250) kindly gave us the recipe. He uses Yarra Valley feta, a cow's milk feta marinated in herbs, garlic and oil, and available from Mercato in Christchurch (and On Trays in Petone, Wellington). They also stock microgreens and snow pea tendrils. Semolina flour is available in good supermarkets and health food stores.

AARON McLEAN

This quantity of gnocchi is sufficent for 6-8 people. We have adapted the recipe slightly for the home cook.

- **1 egg, lightly beaten**
- **pinch of saffron threads**
- **rock salt for baking potatoes**
- **750g floury potatoes (Agria, Whataroa or Huakaroro), scrubbed**
- **150g (1 cup) fine semolina flour**
- **50g parmesan, freshly grated (½ cup)**
- **2 finely chopped tablespoons chives**
- **sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **olive oil for tossing**

Lightly whisk the egg and saffron together in a small bowl and set aside to infuse.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Place a layer of rock salt in an oven dish, top with the potatoes and bake for 1 hour or until cooked through. Allow to cool a little then peel and pass through a mouli or sieve into a bowl – you should have 500g of cooked potato.

Fold the flour into the potato then gently stir in the egg mixture, parmesan and chives. Season with sea salt and black pepper. Do not overwork the mixture or the gnocchi will be tough.

Roll the mixture into cylinders about 2.5cm in diameter then with a floured knife cut the cylinders diagonally into 2.5cm lengths.

Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a simmer. Add the gnocchi in batches and cook for 5-8 minutes or until they float then cook for a further minute. Remove one from the water and test – it should be cooked in the centre and not gluey. When cooked, drain the gnocchi and refresh in iced water then drain again. Toss with a little olive oil, cover and refrigerate until required (it will keep for 2-3 days).

To serve

- **30g butter**
- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **8 leaves rainbow chard or silverbeet, stems removed and torn**
- **1 cup peas**
- **2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- **60ml extra virgin olive, plus extra for drizzling**
- **200g Yarra Valley Persian feta**
- **24 cherry tomatoes, halved**
- **small handful micro purple radish sprouts**
- **small handful snow pea tendrils**
- **sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- **freshly grated parmesan**

In a sauté pan, fry the gnocchi in half the butter and oil until lightly caramelised and browned. In a separate pan add the remaining butter and oil and wilt the chard. Add the peas to warm through. Place in a bowl and dress with the lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil.

Divide the gnocchi and greens among the plates then scatter the feta, cherry tomatoes, micro sprouts and snow pea shoots over. Season with salt and pepper, and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and serve with freshly grated parmesan. Serves 6-8. ●

Credits: Braga small and large dip bowl from Country Road. For full details, see Credits Index.

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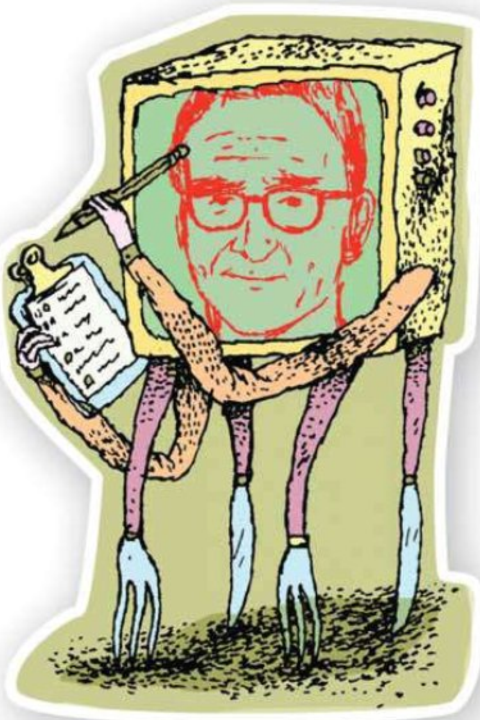
REALITY BITES



THE THING ABOUT MASTERCHEF NEW ZEALAND IS THAT IT ACTUALLY GETS REAL, SAYS **RAY McVINNIE**

ILLUSTRATION BY HENRIK DRESCHER

Is there anything anyone has not used as a subject for a reality TV show? We have seen "tribes" of semi-naked hunks and amazons careering around tropical islands being nasty to each other; makeover shows that turn sad unfortunates into better dressed sad unfortunates; "swap" shows whose formula involves the equivalent of Osama bin Laden going to work as a Republican fundraiser, while George Bush makes videos for Al-Qaeda; wax-work-come-to-life talent quests where wannabes eerily approximate famous entertainers and "talent" seems an incidental backdrop for the real stars, the judges... It's all a bit last century.

But you can understand people's fascination with being a fly on the wall, watching people in extremis.

Then there are food shows. They, too, take various forms, from the expletive-laden crusade of the celebrity chef whipping kitchens into shape to the gladiatorial exploits of the kitchen samurai in *Iron Chef*.

Michael Pollan remarked in *The New York Times* last year that food reality doesn't help you cook, just as you don't learn how to play sport by watching it. What these shows teach us, wrote Pollan, professor of journalism at Berkeley, is culinary fashion. We can learn how not to be a geek at dinner parties or when eating out. In the 19th century, Grimod de La Reynière – the inventor of restaurant and food guides – did the same job for the aspiring class of nouveau riche in post-revolutionary France, so it isn't new.

Pollan also notes that, despite the trend for people actually to cook less, these shows are popular because of the fundamental attraction of food.

And then there is the type of show in which I am a judge, the first series of *MasterChef New Zealand*. While being asked to pontificate about anything is always wildly attractive to me, it was also appealing because the show was not all about backstabbing contestants who look as if they came straight from central casting. It was about cooking – melodramatic at times, but the focus was on cooking and food knowledge.

The directors, reality-show veterans, said how different it was to make this one. The prizes seemed the last thing on contestants' minds, a big contrast to the usual grasping attitude on such shows. The high level of emotion generated by a show whose main action was simply people cooking also intrigued them. Everyone was affected (my teenaged daughter informed me of her upcoming social death – at her age it's all about her – because her father appeared to cry on national television).

No one should have been surprised at the level of emotion – one contestant likened putting her culinary efforts under scrutiny to carving her heart out and placing it on a plate, albeit beautifully arranged and garnished – as the point was to show real people cooking under pressure. As anyone in a professional kitchen will say, cooking under pressure provides drama enough for even the most hopeless adrenalin junkie. It was one of the reasons I became a chef.

People often asked which of us was the evil judge, which showed how rooted their expectations were in the reality formula. We were pleased to reply that none of us was the evil judge, or at times we all were.

The point was that we were dealing with real cooks from whom we wanted the best. And we knew as professionals, unlike Gordon Ramsay perhaps, that you don't get the best out of people by humiliating them. The amazing degree of improvement in contestants' skills and the frequent reversal of seemingly irretrievably bad situations by them was testament to this approach.

Pollan's article was entitled "Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch" because, he argued, the unreality of food reality shows had stopped people cooking – they watch others cook, but no longer cook themselves.

I thought of calling this piece "Off the Couch and into the Kitchen", because everyone I spoke to said how *MasterChef* inspired them to cook. Indeed, all through filming the judges were happy to give advice to the numerous daily enquiries we had from the crew on cooking and food.

I could not pick which contestant was going to win, almost to the last challenge. This unpredictability was another thing that intrigued the directors and made this show such a thrilling ride. On every other reality show they had done it had become clear very quickly who would win. Not so with *MasterChef*.

My theory is that it's because cooking relies on taking an unstable commodity, food (the same ingredients can vary from day to day), and making it perform in a certain way. Ironically, making food perform in a certain way can mean not interfering with it too much. Add to this the fact even the most accomplished cooks have "off" days and it adds up to drama.

Having suspected all of this about the show, I jumped at the chance to be a judge. As it turned out it was one of the most interesting experiences of my professional life.

All cooks will tell you that you can never learn everything about food; it is one of the things which keeps us entranced with the discipline. I was fascinated at the end of each session of filming that I always thought, "That was so interesting." I learnt something every day from the directors, contestants, my fellow judges, not to mention the guest judges, and was forced to rethink many of my ideas about cooking. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. ●

■ *MasterChef New Zealand* is screening on TV One on Wednesdays at 7.30pm.

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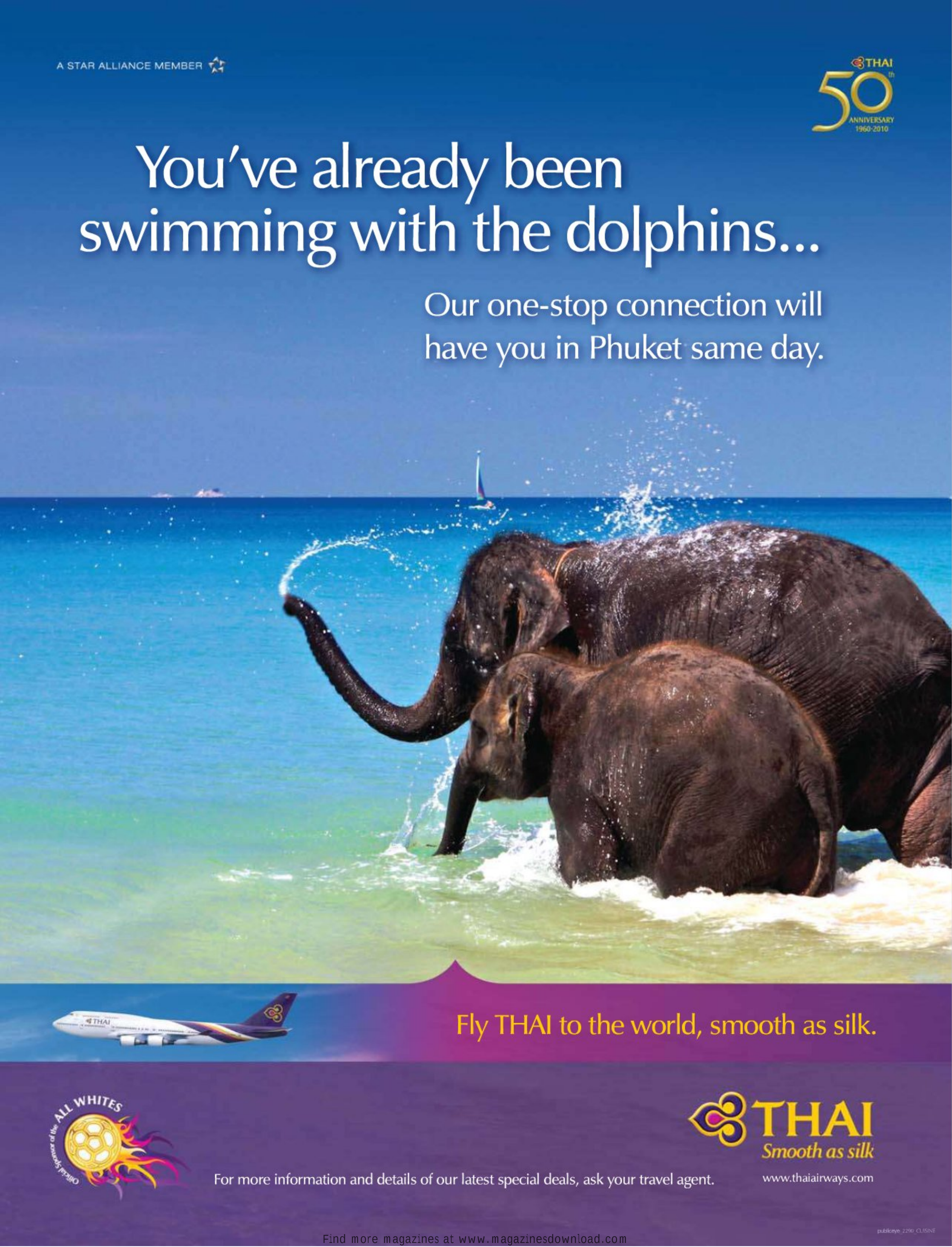

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